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Pianist 94
February-March 2017
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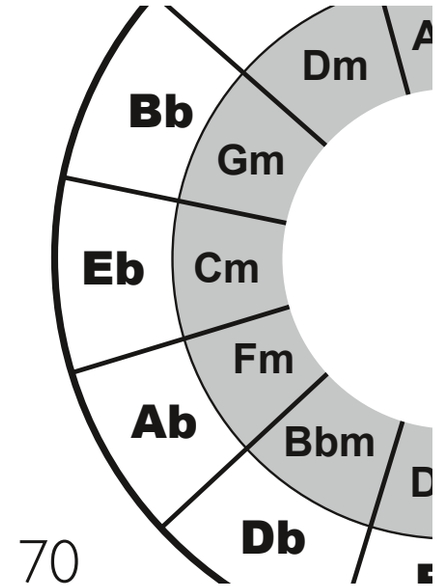

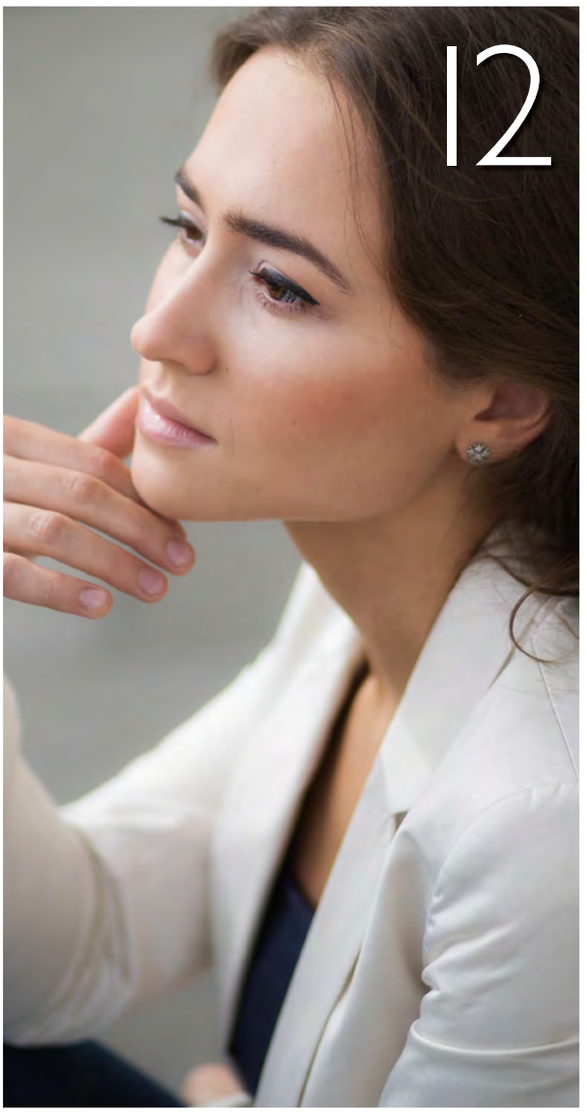

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A WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR

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Editor's note

Fleet fingers. Don't we all wish we had them? Oh to be able to play Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* at full speed, or sail through Chopin's 'Revolutionary' Etude. Some may say we're born (or not) with fleet fingers, but I say it's more about nurture than nature. 'Nothing will come of nothing,' said King Lear. A version for pianists: 'Do something to help your technique, and you'll reap the benefits'.

At the start of the road to technical proficiency, pianists often work on Hanon exercises – namely *The Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises* (try the two on pages 45 and 46). On page 72, John Evans delves into the history of these famous exercises and finds out what today's pianists have to say. Even the likes of Lang Lang and Benjamin Grosvenor did their duty with the pianistic equivalent of the gym. But it's not just about plonking your way through one exercise after another; they only do you good with 'full involvement of the ear and the mind', as Graham Fitch remarks.

Even Beethoven was adamant about scale practice. He expected all his students to know their scales so he could focus on the stuff that really mattered: expression and interpretation. Read Nils Franke's fascinating article, 'Piano lessons with Beethoven' (page 78) to discover a different side to a familiar figure.

This issue isn't all focus on the fingers. There's no doubt that Leeds Competition winner Anna Tsybuleva has technique to burn (listen to her playing a Saint-Saëns étude on our covermount CD), but as she tells us on page 12, it's also important to take time out from the keyboard to keep in shape: she uses meditation, swimming and walking up mountains. My advice? A little piano-gym goes a long way. Why not spend 5-10 minutes a day on your technique, whether it be Hanon, scales, arpeggios, Pischner – or a combination of your choice. It's unlikely you'll find yourself in the situation where you're asked to play the Chopin Etudes, but wouldn't it feel great to whizz off the 'Revolutionary' one day?

In the meantime, Peter Donohoe reminds us on page 10 that the easiest music can be the hardest to play. As he says, the genius of Mozart – demonstrated by Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and Mitsuko Uchida, whose latest recordings are reviewed on page 86 – is that it can take a morning to learn, but a lifetime to master. Here's another old phrase: don't compare yourself to others. Compare yourself to the person you were yesterday. Víkingur Ólafsson describes on page 67 how intimidating it was to walk the corridors of the Juilliard School and hear Brahms's Paganini Variations thundering from every other practice room. But perseverance – and exercises – kept him going. He's now playing Philip Glass for Deutsche Grammophon – and that takes fleet fingers!

P.S. Our Piano Buyer's Guide 2017 is now live on the *Pianist* website, free for anyone to view! It's the perfect 'go-to' resource listing over 115 pianos – digital, upright and grand – for all tastes and all budgets.

Erica

ERICA WORTH, EDITOR

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How many exercises does Hanon feature inside his anthology **The Virtuoso Pianist?**
A: 24 ***B: 40*** ***C: 60***

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Results for reader competition in *Pianist* 91: *Question:* How many *Gymnopédies* did Satie write? *Answer:* 3. Congratulations to winners Mrs D Cotton (Brighton), Judy Marks (Essex), Mr Glen Mason (Wiltshire)

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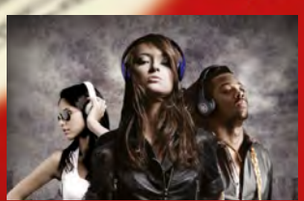

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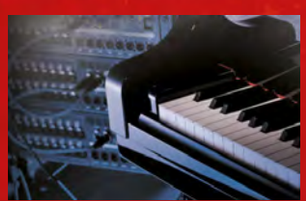

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STAR LETTER wins a surprise CD. Letters may be edited.

STAR LETTER

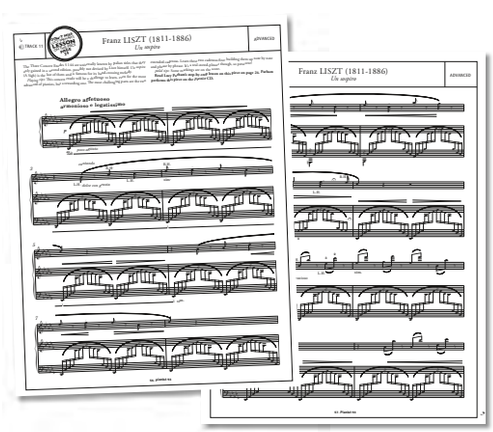
Playing by ear

On the Letters page of issue 93, Derek Connolly says that he cannot play music without a score in front of him, and so he is unable to improvise. This seems to be a common problem. I think that the ability to play by ear is the first step to being able to improvise, which can be achieved by everyone with a little work.

So this is how I set about improving my ability to play by ear: Because I have been a subscriber to your excellent magazine from the first issue I have an amazing learning resource of scores with CDs. I put a cover CD on the player and listen to the first piece, probably only the first few phrases, and try to replicate it on the keyboard. Then I check with the music to see if I am correct. In other words I am listening first, reading the music second. The pieces become harder as one moves through each CD/issue. I have been surprised to find that I am better at this than I expected, and my ear is definitely improving.

Ruth Hughes, Cumbria, UK

Congratulations on having found such an original way of improving your ability to play by ear! It must take some persevering too. A surprise CD is on its way to you.



Why *Un sospiro*?

Your inclusion of Liszt's *Un sospiro* in issue 93 prompts a number of questions in my mind. This is a virtuoso piece, requiring a consummate technique. Anyone who can play it can play almost anything in the piano repertoire. Anyone who can play it will almost certainly already have the score in their library.

So why include it in *Pianist*? The implication would seem to be that those of us with less than consummate techniques might like to 'have a go' at it, but what would the purpose or value of this be? Why would anyone take pleasure or satisfaction from performing badly pieces that are too hard for them, rather than performing pieces that are within their technical capability to a good standard? And why would you encourage them to do so?

I would much rather perform a piece that I can master technically in order to be able to create a meaningful interpretation than 'busk' my way through something that is far too hard and consequently sounds either a mess or meaningless, at half speed or with 'simplified' rhythms. What do you and other readers think?

Anyone who, like me, loves Liszt but often finds him too difficult (as in the case of *Un Sospiro* and the third *Liebestraum*, which you published a while ago) might like to know that he himself made a simplifed arrangement of his marvellous *Legend: St Francis Walking on the Water*, which is within the reach of anyone at around Grade 8.

Joseph Laredo, London, UK

In his book 'Play it Again', the former Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger described learning Chopin's First Ballade in a single year (and then performing it), even though he knew it was way beyond his playing abilities. Everyone has the right to learn what they want, and to push the boundaries, just as Rusbridger did. Most of our readers tell us they don't wish to perform in public. We think that telling a pianist not to learn a piece of music because it's beyond their capabilities is like telling a novice painter to give up painting water lilies because they'll never be as good as Claude Monet. However, it's worth taking note of the advice, given by Mark Tanner in his Mindfulness article on page 16, that you should not overreach your ambitions. What do other readers think?

Loving *Un sospiro*!

I wanted to let you know how much I love issue 93. I have over 20 issues of *Pianist* and this issue is by far my favourite for both articles and sheet music. What caught my eye immediately was the inclusion of Liszt's *Un sospiro*. I am an intermediate/advanced student and have worked on this piece for the past year. What I liked best was the fingering you included. This is a piece I will never be able to to play in public, but that doesn't matter to me. I find myself playing it often for just myself. It's addictive and challenging. Keep including wonderful pieces like this in future issues.

Sally Olson, Chicago, USA

Narrower keyboards for larger hands

Thank you for publishing John Evans' article, 'The Upper Hand', in issue 93, which highlights an important topic of interest to all pianists.

Research shows that the 'one-size-fits-all' piano keyboard does not suit all hands. The current keyboard was designed to suit European male virtuosos of the late 19th century. During the 20th century, the changing gender and ethnic mix of pianists has meant that for most, their hand span is not well matched to this keyboard. The link between inadequate hand span and the pain and injury affecting many pianists is well established in the performing arts health literature. Equally important is the enhanced quality of a pianist's performance, particularly for advanced repertoire, when the piano keyboard fits the hand.

A pianist's hand span depends on three characteristics: hand width, finger length and flexibility. Hence, short fingers can be offset by having a broad hand and good flexibility; or narrow, bony hands with good flexibility and long fingers can result in quite a wide span. While plaster casts of pianists' hands might illustrate obvious visual characteristics such as shape and finger length, they cannot provide an accurate indication of flexibility or reach.

The data collected in our study (referred to in John Evans' article) of the hand spans of 473 pianists confirms the results of previous studies, showing that hand spans among adults vary enormously. In our study, thumb to fifth finger spans ranged from 6.4 inches (smallest female) to 10.8 inches (largest male), more than the width of four white piano keys. The average span of adult males is one inch greater than that of adult females, slightly more than the width of one white piano key.

Steinbuhler DS® keyboards (www.steinbuhler.com) are gaining popularity, particularly in North America. These narrower keyboards effectively give pianists 'larger hands'. Personal reactions from these pianists are consistent in describing the relief from pain and injury as well as enhanced personal enjoyment, thus allowing them to reach their technical and artistic potential. Our analysis indicates that about 24% of men and 87% of women would benefit from playing a keyboard with narrower keys. For a summary of the relevant literature on hand size and piano playing, please visit www.smallpianokeyboards.org.

Rhonda Boyle, Robin Boyle, Erica Booker, Victoria, Australia

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News

All the latest news from the world of the piano

MAURIZIO POLLINI TURNS 75

Concerts and CDs for veteran pianist

On 2 January Maurizio Pollini celebrated his 75th birthday. Nothing daunted by the landmark, the Italian pianist still has a busy performing and recording schedule. On 21 February and 14 March he gives concerts at the Royal Festival Hall in London's Southbank Centre. The programmes will feature four composers who have been central to his career: Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy and Schoenberg. His account of Debussy's second book of Préludes will be repeated at Carnegie Hall on 21 May and the Salzburg Festival on 17 August.

Deutsche Grammophon has released his complete recordings for the label in a 58CD box, including two cycles of the concertos by Beethoven and Brahms and the major works of Chopin. There is also a new disc of Chopin (reviewed in the next issue), issued separately, which focuses on the composer's late and most elusive music. The resurgence of consumer interest in vinyl is reflected in the label's reissue on LP of his classic 1972 set of Chopin's Etudes. 'I'm in love with Chopin,' remarked Pollini recently, 45 years after the release of that multi-award-winning record. 'His music never ceases to amaze me.'

Pianist will pay an extended tribute to Pollini in a future issue. Another musical birthday fell on 31 January, when Philip Glass turned 80 years old – or young, as you can read on page 67 from Víkingur Ólafsson's tales of touring with the inexhaustible composer. DG again leads the anniversary celebrations, with Ólafsson's new disc of piano music: this includes both studies and a solo-piano transcription of the opening of the hit *Glassworks* album from 1982.

RICK WAKEMAN'S STAIRWAY TO THE CLASSICS

Rock pianist releases first classical album

'My music teacher taught me that music was colour,' says Wakeman of the composers he has chosen to play on his new album, *Piano Portraits*. 'You're painting pictures. I hear what I'm going to play a couple of seconds before I actually play it. And then I see pictures.'

Having had a classical training, Wakeman began his career in a folk-rock group and as a session musician for the likes of David Bowie and Elton John. Joining the rock band Yes brought wider fame for his coruscating keyboard skills, but his worldwide breakthrough came in 1976 when he left Yes to establish his own group. Wakeman made two classics of the prog-rock genre featuring his coruscating keyboard work: *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, a concept album based on Jules Verne's novel, and *The Six Wives of Henry the Eighth*, which taps into deep Classical and folksong roots.

Now Wakeman has returned to the classics, on his 100th studio album, with his own, idiosyncratic interpretations of Debussy, Chopin and Tchaikovsky. They are joined by solo-piano arrangements of *Amazing Grace* and pop anthems such as *Eleanor Rigby*, *Stairway to Heaven* and *Life on Mars*, in which the pianist pays tribute to the memory of his late colleague Bowie. The album is released both on CD and as a 2LP set by Universal Music Group, and the pianist talks to Erica Worth in the next issue about his career and his extraordinary collection of pianos and keyboards.

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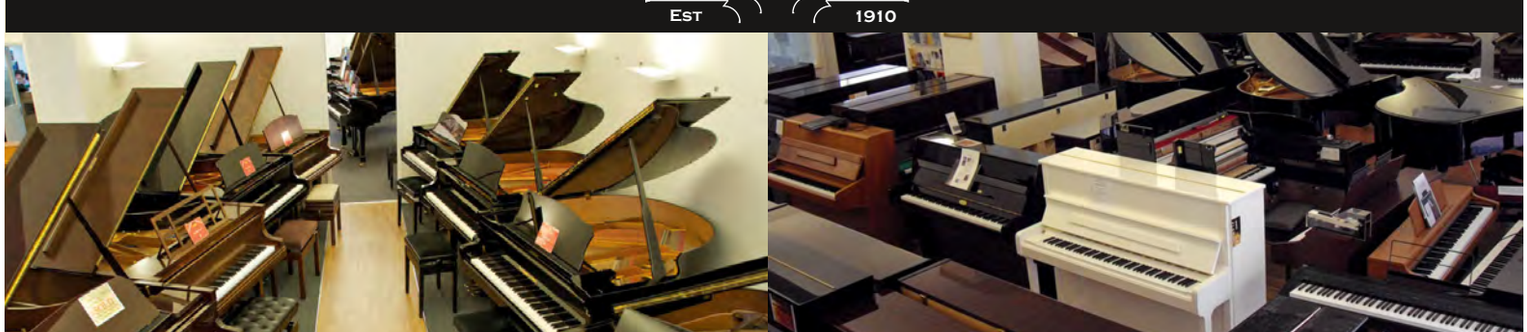

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OBITUARY: ANTHONY GOLDSTONE
Death of much-loved duet pianist

On 2 January the death was announced of Anthony Goldstone. For many years he had been well-known to UK audiences and record-buyers in a duet partnership with his wife, Caroline Clemmow.

Born in Liverpool in 1944, Goldstone studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music (now the RNCM) and won international prizes and a Gulbenkian Fellowship. There followed a busy solo career which included an appearance at the last night of the 1976 BBC Proms, when he played the left-hand *Diversions* by Benjamin Britten. 'Thank you most sincerely for that brilliant performance,' Britten later wrote to him. 'I wish I could have been at the Royal Albert Hall to join in the cheers.'

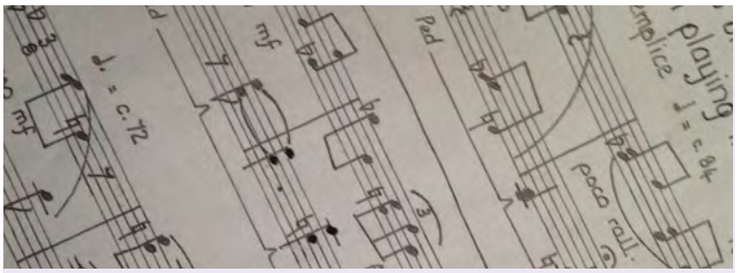
His playing was distinguished by a communicative warmth and sincerity but also underpinned by an intellectual rigour which he had absorbed from his early studies with Maria Curcio, who was herself a pupil of Artur Schnabel. Goldstone regarded Schnabel as the supreme exponent of the Classical masters, and the two men shared a devotion to the music of Schubert. In Goldstone's case, this led him and Clemmow to record not only the duet repertoire such as the turbulent F minor Fantasy, but also several discs of 'unauthorized duets' including versions of the completed Eighth Symphony, the 'Death and the Maiden' String Quartet and Arpeggione Sonata. He brought no less indefatigable energy to completing many of the fragments and projects which Schubert had mysteriously abandoned or placed in the bottom drawer such as the 'Reliquie' Sonata D840.

His repertoire extended far beyond the Austro-German classics, to out-of-the-way Romantics, Russian repertoire from the Silver Age and 20th century British composers, always chosen with an eye for the unfamiliar and no less astute ears for the unjustly neglected.

Most of the Goldstone-Clemmow recordings were produced by Goldstone at his local church (another string to the bow of this Renaissance man) and are available on Divine Art, which will issue the complete Schubert as a box set in tribute to his memory later in 2017.

GRAHAM FITCH IN CONCERT

One of the resident keyboard gurus at *Pianist*, Graham Fitch appears in concert on 17 March, playing the Goldberg Variations of JS Bach at Rosslyn Hill Chapel in Hampstead, London. 'A meditation in the practice room and an epic journey on stage,' says Fitch of Bach's endlessly fascinating work, which he will explore in more detail after the concert with an audience discussion to be chaired by the pianist, teacher and blogger Frances Wilson. All profits from ticket sales will be donated to BAPAM (British Association for Performing Arts Medicine), and there is a special offer for readers of *Pianist*: discounted tickets are available at https://billetto.co.uk/en/events/bachs-goldberg-variations-special-offer.



WINNER OF 2016 *PIANIST* COMPOSING COMPETITION ANNOUNCED!

Congratulations to Evelyn Dobson, who has been chosen as the winner of our 2016 Composing Competition. She receives a Kawai upright model K-15E worth over £3,350. Her winning score will be published inside *Pianist* and performed on the covermount CD.

Dobson, from Plymouth, wowed the judges with her composition *Ceasefire*. The judging panel – consisting of *Pianist* Editor Erica Worth, music educator Nigel Scaife, composer John Kember and Kawai representative Matt Ash – agreed that the piece was distinguished by its musical intelligence, thematic consistency, subtle harmonies, originality and a great poignancy. The 47-bar piece is prefaced with a short introduction in which Dobson writes of children emerging onto the streets of the Syrian city of Aleppo to play during a ceasefire. 'This will take a while to sink in,' she said. 'I'm shocked, because I felt sure I hadn't got the key quite right. One of the things I wanted was to make it playable, so that anyone could have a go. I did want it to be accessible.' She is a piano teacher with 60 years' experience, having taken on her first pupil when she was 14 years old.

Judging the competition wasn't easy: there were 130 entrants of all ages (the youngest being eight!) and from all corners of the globe. A full feature about the competition – in which the judges discuss the process, explain what they were looking for and mention other pieces that impressed them – will appear in *Pianist* 96.

RUBICON CLASSICS
New label gives recording debuts to young artists

'Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated,' said Mark Twain, and the same could be said of the classical recording industry. The greenest shoot in the field in 2017 is Rubicon Classics, which has been set up by experienced industry executives to introduce promising musicians and develop emerging talent alongside some young but already renowned artists.

First out of the traps is the 29-year-old French pianist Julien Brocal, whose all-Chopin album was released in January. Brocal has already impressed Maria João Pires enough to form an occasional duet partnership with him. The album is subtitled 'In states of bliss', which embrace a complete set of the Op 28 Préludes as well as the Second Piano Sonata.

Pianists on later releases include Sonya Bach (playing, appropriately enough, Bach concertos) and Esther Birringer, who partners her sister Lea in a sonata recital of Grieg, Liszt and Franck. Danny Driver will also accompany Chloë Hanslip in a complete set of Beethoven's violin sonatas.

Founder-director of the label, Matthew Cosgrove, is a former record executive for EMI and Warner Classics, and the General Manager of Onyx Classics, which has a track record of impressive recording debuts from the likes of Saleem Abboud Ashkar. Cosgrove promises that the label will cross the classical rubicon with jazz and contemporary releases. It has a strong online and social-media presence: find out more at its Facebook page or at rubiconclassics.com.

© Matthias Creutziger/DG (Pollini); © Erica Worth (Fitch)

Consumed by music
PETER DONOHOE

Having made complete recordings of Prokofiev and Scriabin sonatas, the British virtuoso faces his greatest challenge yet, he tells **Peter Quantrill**

Now that all the sonatas are recorded, are you giving Prokofiev a rest?
Not really! I love his music more and more as I get to know the lesser-known works, and I see it in a different light to when I was younger.

How has your attitude changed?
Most people think of Prokofiev as percussive, anti-establishment and not very nice, and a lot of pianists and listeners are put off by his music for those reasons. But actually he thought of himself as a lyrical composer. Even the first movement of the Sixth Sonata is much less barbaric or monochrome than it may first appear. Some people have treated it as a scream of horror against the Soviet system. What about it representing the industrialisation and modernisation of the Soviet system?

Prokofiev's teacher complained that he over-pedalled his own music. Do you find particular technical challenges to his music?
I tend to respond to the score. One has a certain interest in the background to the pieces, but I don't feel I need insider knowledge like that because what he wants seems to leap off the page.

Not all composers convey what they want in the marks on the page.
That's the difference between Prokofiev and Scriabin, who was scruffy in the way he wrote down his music, especially in the placement of dynamics. It doesn't work if you do exactly what's written.

Why are you doing Scriabin now?
I had a tendency to like too many pieces when I was younger. I wanted to play everything. Someone warned me to be careful not to be a jack of all trades, with no critical faculties. So I thought, I must find a composer I don't like, so I can avoid that music, and I came up with Scriabin. And I did, apart from the Fifth Sonata and one Etude which I was required to play at the Tchaikovsky Competition. Thirty years later, I heard a performance of the Third Sonata at that same competition, where I was now a juror, by the eventual winner, who was Daniil Trifonov. It was a revelation.

What did you hear in Trifonov's playing that turned the light on for you?
The Third is very Chopinesque, and has a deeply felt, uninhibited emotion that reminded me of Messiaen. There was something about Scriabin that frightened me. Once you get involved in it, the music is all-consuming. You can't stop practising it, you can't stop programming it, and it starts to change your personality if you're not careful! After some hours with the late music, learning it and practising it endlessly, I would come down from my piano studio and have to hide for a few minutes before I could talk to anyone.

You've chosen to play all ten sonatas in a single concert.
Quite an undertaking for the audience! One reason Scriabin isn't played much is that he's difficult to programme. You don't have to show different sides of Beethoven or Brahms because all the sides are there, all the time. The humour, the seriousness, the drama, the defiance, the conflict, they're all in every work you play. With Scriabin, you need more than one work to make sense of him. I feel closest to the Second and Third Sonatas. In the Fourth and Fifth Sonatas you can begin to hear him turning away, into himself. There's the way also he weirdly anticipates jazz: the Fourth at points is like playing Art Tatum. The later works unfold like single statements,They don't have a feeling of climax, more like Messiaen in that way. It's difficult for me to fully love Nos 9 and 10 – a representation of something degenerative – because he'd really lost it by the time he wrote those. Whereas 6, 7 and 8 work wonderfully in combination, like Prokofiev, coincidentally.

Where should Pianist readers start with Scriabin?
The Preludes. Not the Sonatas: every one of them is transcendentally difficult! I suspect Scriabin was quite jealous of Rachmaninov, both of his success and the size of his hands, and you can feel that in his music. I don't think Scriabin's hands were as big as his music suggests he'd like them to be. His early music lies under the fingers if you play a lot of Chopin, but I found the late sonatas easier to play, maybe because of my experience with 20th-century music.

They can exert an almost narcotic attraction.
Well, I needed some kind of antidote to that narcotic feeling, and the antidote I chose was Mozart. It's the greatest challenge of all. Or perhaps the second greatest, after Bach's *48*. With virtually every composer other than Mozart, it's not so difficult to get to a point where you know what you want to do with it, but that's the challenge with Mozart. And the fact that you can more or less sightread all of it makes it more difficult. A sonata such as the simple-sounding K570 in B flat, you can play it perfectly well first time round. But it's never good enough. Which is going to be a bit of a problem when we record it!

Now I want to go back and listen to K284 – it's a favourite of mine.
Mine too. It's one of the great under-rated works of the whole Classical period. I've played it about 20 times over the last couple of years, and I particularly love it. I've agreed to play the first six sonatas at Chethams Summer School, which is already terrifying the living daylights out of me. The first sonata – which isn't an immature work at all, it's already K279 – is wonderful. You can feel he found it easy to write, whereas it's impossible for the rest of us to play it. Even when you have a movement which is apparently based on quite a light-hearted or trivial tune, there is something unattainable about it. With the variation finale of K284, you need to have known it for about 40 years before you can even begin to be thinking on the high level that it's written. And it has a strange formal anomaly: there is no slow movement in that sonata until variation 11 of the finale. What an extraordinary idea.

Peter Donohoe records for Somm Records. The complete Prokofiev sonatas are now available; Scriabin and then Mozart will be issued during 2017 and 2018. He plays the Scriabin sonatas in Milton Court Concert Hall, London, on 23 April and Prokofiev's 'War' trilogy at Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton, on 16 May.

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Anna LEEDS the Way

A year after her sensational win at Leeds, the Russian pianist talks to **Warwick Thompson** about the sacrifices of life as a virtuoso and how she handles the pressure

By the time that the Russian pianist Anna Tsybuleva was awarded first prize in the 2015 Leeds International Piano Competition, she had already achieved significant success elsewhere. She received first prize at the Gilels competition in Odessa in 2012, and in the same year was a winner at the Hamamatsu competition in Japan. But getting the top gong at Leeds was a different thing altogether. 'It's such a major competition – it was a new league,' she says. 'I had already begun my path – quite a hard path – before that, but immediately after the Leeds prize was announced, I understood that I was now really on the first step of my journey. Everything I had done before was a little step.'

Winning Leeds put her swiftly and firmly on the radar of major orchestras and festivals. Since claiming her prize, she has made debuts with the Mariinsky, St Petersburg, and Royal Philharmonic orchestras, and she has performed at such gold-standard venues as the Salle Cortot, Wigmore Hall and Tonhalle Zürich. But as many young musicians find out (some to their cost), the life of a major prize-winner does not consist merely of sipping cocktails on a lounger while waiting for a call from the Vienna Musikverein. The hard-working and sensible Tsybuleva (pronounced tsih-bul-YO-va) has also performed at plenty of worthy, if less glamorous, venues to build her post-Leeds career, having appeared at festivals in (for example) Northern Aldborough, Chipping Campden and Hebden Bridge. It doesn't hurt, of course, that she falls comfortably – as her striking publicity photos demonstrate – into that fortunate category of performer which agents term 'Easy to Promote'.

Tsybuleva is happy to be an ambassador for the Leeds competition, and for its forthcoming revamp in 2018 (see the article on page 14). When speaking about her own experiences there, she reveals nothing but happy memories. 'The atmosphere was so friendly, so supportive. I really felt like I was at home. And the place where we stayed – Devonshire Hall, on the Leeds University campus – was wonderful. All the competitors were housed there, and we all had breakfast, lunch and dinner together: and if sometimes someone was nervous, or upset, we all tried to help each other. We all understood how stressful the situation was.'

Main picture: winner Anna Tsybuleva on stage after her finals performance; Inset, from left to right: conductor Sir Mark Elder, Dame Fanny Waterman, Anna Tsybuleva and Dame Janet Baker

Like many artists before her, Tsybuleva coped with the unavoidable anxiety by treating the event as a series of concerts. 'I didn't think of four rounds: I thought of four concerts. And it helped that the public in Leeds was so warm. When I played the final round [with Brahms's Piano Concerto No 2] they behaved as if it were a concert: I could feel their response very deeply.'

Student years

When Tsybuleva talks of feeling 'at home' somewhere, it's clear that the phrase has a particularly strong resonance for her. She was born in 1990 in the tiny town of Nizhny Arkhyz, roughly 1500 km south of Moscow. This remote place formerly housed a massive Soviet telescope, and thus had a disproportionately high number of high-ranking scientists and academics among its inhabitants: and when one considers how closely the mathematical sciences and music have always been related, perhaps it is not surprising that a great musician should have sprung from such a milieu.

© Page 12: Leeds International Piano Competition; Page 13: ©Vera Ley

From the age of six she had lessons with her mother Svetlana, a pianist and art historian. When it became apparent at the age of ten that she had real talent, Tsybuleva moved, alone, to Volgograd, about 700km away, to continue her piano studies. Understandably she missed her parents, and found the new regime strict and demanding: so much so that when her mother came to visit, and saw how hard her life was, she suggested giving up the struggle and moving back home. The ten-year-old girl answered, 'No, mummy. It's too late to go back.' How does Tsybuleva feel about that extraordinary moment of self-determination now? 'It was shocking for my mum. She wasn't ready to hear such a thing from her little girl. But at the time, for me, it seemed very natural. I could feel that I was moving forwards. From that moment, I never doubted that I was on the right way – and my mum came to understand that.'

Svetlana respected her child's wishes and supported her development wholeheartedly until her untimely death just seven years later. By that time (from 2003 onwards) Anna was working with professor Lyudmila Roschina, with whom she continued to study at the Moscow State Conservatory. She also now studies with professor Claudio Martínez Mehner at the Basel Music Academy, but it is to her earlier pedagogue that she gives the laurels: 'She's my musical mother,' says Tsybuleva. 'It's a very Russian thing, to have such a strong connection between student and professor. And even now if I need any advice – not only musical advice – I call her. How to concentrate before a concert, how to prepare, even how to relax after a concert... she gives me such useful guidance.'

After all that one learns about the early voluntary separation from her parents, and the death of her mother, it is easy to understand that when Tsybuleva speaks of 'home' – as she does about Leeds – it means a great deal. And her affection for the competition has only grown since her triumph. 'I've had such huge support from Paul Lewis and Adam Gatehouse (the new joint Artistic Directors). We discuss my future repertoire together, and they help me choose my programmes. Honestly, it's even more important than the prize money [£20,000] to be guided and supported by such people. It means so much to me.'

Life after Leeds

'Home', in its more literal sense, also now means 'Moscow' to Tsybuleva. This is where she lives with her viola-player husband in a small flat. 'There are two pianos, but one is an electronic keyboard with headphones so that my neighbours won't kill me.' She feels that being with another musician eases some of the burdens of her increasingly peripatetic life: 'There's a good understanding between us, and I'm happy we have this. He has his own projects, and travels quite often too... but we play and perform together quite a lot.'

In addition to her schedule of practise and performance, Tsybuleva also likes to keep fit. 'I go with my husband to the gym or swimming pool around 10pm, usually after we finish practising. I think it's important for musicians to be fit, to be healthy... My husband and I even have sports medals from our time at conservatory, when we competed in university championships. It was a wonderful feeling: rather than waiting to be called on stage, we were waiting for the call for our swimming lanes.'

She also reveals that meditation forms an important part of her development. 'It's a vital tool to control your thoughts. Whatever feelings I experience, whatever is important – I try to observe it all, and use it in my performance. I love to climb in the mountains, and it's such a special feeling when you're standing on the top of a peak, breathing the air... I know that Brahms loved the mountains as well, and it helps me when I play the Second Concerto. I try to get close to the same feelings that the composer had.'

Leeds may have been the first step: but the journey continues for Tsybuleva. ■

Anna Tsybuleva appears in recital in the UK at Skipton Town Hall (24 Jan), Hinchingbrooke Performing Arts Centre, Huntingdon (27 Jan), St Mary's Perivale, London (12 Mar), Ripon Cathedral, Harrogate (13 Mar). Her debut album will be issued by Champs Hill Records.

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SAINT-SAËNS ETUDE EN FORME DE VALSE OP 52 NO 6

LEEDS Renewed

Online auditions, an innovative jury system and a bigger budget: the competition's new artistic directors outline ambitious plans and visions to **Warwick Thompson**

Dame Fanny Waterman, the diminutive and indomitable motor behind the triennial Leeds International Piano Competition which she founded in 1961, announced last year that she was stepping down from front-line duties and handing over the reins. She was 95 years of age. Adam Gatehouse, the new co-artistic director of the competition with pianist Paul Lewis, tells me that the board hoped that they might be able directly to replace Dame Fanny in the way she was operating. 'But it quickly became apparent that she was irreplaceable,' he says. I roll my eyes a little bit at the use of such a well-worn platitude, but he pulls me up short. 'I don't mean that in a flattering way. I mean it quite literally. She was doing the work of four different people.' Gatehouse is looking forward to the next competition in 2018. 'If we're going to take the competition forward into the 21st century, you simply can't have one person doing all that. That became very quickly evident.'

'I think the way in which we came to be involved was a process of evolution,' says Lewis, when I meet him at Wigmore Hall after the official re-launch of the event. 'It was felt that some change was needed, and it was time for it to happen.'

Gatehouse elaborates. 'I'd already served on the jury for the competition, and they asked me for a few thoughts about how it might go forward. Then Mark Wingate, who's now our CEO, said "I'm in discussion with one of the world's leading pianists... would you be interested in coming to talk to him?" When I learned it was Paul, I was thrilled. I've known him for 24 years.' The official meeting was pleasant, but inconclusive. 'But immediately afterwards we went together to Starbucks and in about 20 minutes, had agreed on four fundamentals which we would need if we could see ourselves working on the competition.'

'Some change was needed, and it was time for it to happen': enter Paul Lewis (left) and Adam Gatehouse, directors of the Leeds International Piano Competition

These four fundamentals were announced in the re-launch event at Wigmore Hall in October 2016. Gatehouse and Lewis want to make participation in the competition a more human – even *humane* – experience; to expand its global reach; to make the prize package more meaningful; and to increase its educational work in the community and elsewhere. 'After about an hour and a half in Starbucks, we'd got the whole blueprint,' says Gatehouse.

What's in a prize?

They have excellent foundations upon which to build. Waterman conceived the somewhat daring idea of a non-metropolitan competition in 1961, and the first event took place in 1963. In its 53-year history, it has given a boost to the careers of some of the greatest names of recent times. Radu Lupu (1969), Murray Perahia (1972), and Artur Pizarro (1990) all received first prize, and went on to scale even greater heights. But it's also fascinating to see who *didn't* get the top gong.

© Page 14: Simon J Price: Page 15: © SWPIX (Colli); © Leeds International Piano Competition (all other pictures)

'We all know that when one looks at competitions, it's not always the first-prize winner whose career takes off,' says Gatehouse. 'In 1975 the first prize went to Dmitri Alexeev, but second went to Mitsuko Uchida, and András Schiff came joint third... and Myung-Whun Chung was joint fifth.' It's fair to say that their careers have made a bigger splash than Alexeev's, and it's for this reason that there's a fascinating amount of latitude in one of the 'four fundamentals'. In the category of 'meaningful prize package', the agents Askonas Holt have agreed to represent one of the winners – but not necessarily the *first* prize winner. 'Askonas quite rightly feel that they are a caring management who really like to nurture their artists, and they need to be sure that they find an artist they can work with,' says Gatehouse. 'Or it may even be that the first-prize winner already has an agent... so quite understandably, they wanted to keep that option open.'

A more human competition

The idea that competition juries 'get it wrong' (to put it in the crudest and most reductive of terms) is one which hovers in the minds of audiences and participants alike. Are competitions really a valuable indication of artistic ability? Might it not be said that they turn what should be a celebration of art into a three-ring circus?

Anna Tsybuleva, the first-prize winner in 2015 (see interview on page 12), admits that preparing for another competition is not always the best way of spending time for a musician. 'But it's a crucial way to get noticed, by foundations or promoters who might support you,' she says. 'I grew up very far from Moscow, where it was difficult to get known. And even when I came to Moscow, I soon learned that the city was full of great pianists – it has one of the greatest musical universities in the world. So in that sense, winning a competition is a great way to announce yourself in the international arena.'

Paul Lewis himself has described competitions as a 'necessary evil'. He tells me that the successes in his own career do not owe much to the prizes which he won as a young musician. 'Rather it was being mentored by Alfred Brendel that was crucial for me. And deciding to focus on certain projects like a Schubert sonata cycle, or Beethoven sonata cycle... that was what really built my career, my profile, my identity.' So why is he supporting the Leeds, in that case? 'What we're trying to do is make the competition more human. We want to bring some of the mentoring element into the competition, to increase the amount of chamber music involved. We want to create other opportunities for all the participants, rather than for them just to turn up and get kicked out.' For the first-prize winner Lewis himself will act as a mentor. There will be concert opportunities on BBC Radio 3 and elsewhere, a concerto appearance to open the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's season in 2018, and a debut recording on the boutique Champs Hill label.

Gatehouse, who was 'one of the lucky musicians who never did a competition in my life,' expands on the theme of inclusivity. 'It's crucial that all 24 participants will stay right to the end of the event. It's bad enough being knocked out, but then to have to buy a plane ticket the next day and go home is even worse. We want them all to stay, meet people, make contacts, join in performances, have masterclasses, join in education work.' There are also plans to hold talks, discussions, films and even perhaps an artist-in-residence. A new education officer will be appointed too, and ongoing partnerships with Leeds City Council and the University of Leeds will be expanded to help the competition further its outreach work.

It's clear that Lewis and Gatehouse want the event to be as much a festival as a competition. The wish for a greater global reach will be achieved by having preliminary rounds in Berlin, New York and Singapore in April 2018. The rounds will all be streamed (some live) by medici.tv, offering greater access to online audiences. Considering the paucity of audio-visual information on the competition's current website, this can only be a huge improvement.

Voting: a new approach

Lewis and Gatehouse are also trying hard to avoid the troubling situation in which jurors tend to vote for their own students, and not for the best person on the day. 'I've seen it happen... it's natural in a way, but we want to avoid it,' says Gatehouse. The initial idea has been to have a jury of nine with no more than five pianists: so far Imogen Cooper and Lars Vogt have been announced as members. 'The other four would be non-pianists,' says Gatehouse, 'of which I'll be one.' Lewis continues, 'We won't have full-time piano teachers on the jury. It will be performer led. Some of those performers will have given masterclasses, and may know young musicians in whom they take an interest, of course, and those musicians might be competitors. But it's only really when you have teachers with full-time students that the situation gets complicated.'

There are some wrinkles still to be sorted. What about transparency of voting? Wouldn't that solve the problem of favouritism? 'We've discussed it,' says Lewis, 'but we haven't mentioned it yet to the people who've agreed to come on the jury. It may be that some of them are not comfortable with the idea of having their votes known [but] we'll have to be sensitive to people's feelings all round.'

It all sounds rather utopian – and like all utopias, it comes at a cost. The budget for the 2018 competition is £2.1m, which is roughly double the cost of the previous competition. In these straitened times, where will they find the extra budget? 'Leeds City Council gives something,' says Gatehouse, 'but the majority has always been privately donated.' A fundraising drive has already included positive discussions with Arts Council England and other funds and foundations.

Good luck to them. And, in the meantime, if you happen to know any bankers, financiers or philanthropists with a desire to help young pianists, Lewis and Gatehouse would be delighted to hear from you. ■

Applications for the 2018 competition open in September 2017. First rounds take place in Berlin, New York and Singapore in April 2018, with semi-finals and finals in Leeds in September 2018. Further information at leedspiano.com

21ST CENTURY LEEDS WINNERS

2012 Federico Colli (Italy)
Colli wowed the Leeds jury (and our editor) with his personal slant on Beethoven's 'Emperor' Concerto. He appeared on the April-May 2014 cover of *Pianist* (No 77). He received rave reviews for both his debut UK recital and his first CD for Champs Hill (Beethoven, Scriabin and Mussorgsky).

2009 Sofya Gulyak (Russia)
Gulyak is still based in her native Russia but has recently toured the UK and Canada. Post-Leeds recordings include Rachmaninov (on Champs Hill) and Brahms (Piano Classics).

2006 Sunwook Kim (Korea)
Kim played a mature Brahms First Piano Concerto at his Leeds finals. Releases include Beethoven 'Emperor' Concerto with Myung-Whun Chung and the Seoul Philharmonic on Deutsche Grammophon, and Beethoven sonatas on Accentus Music. He regularly tours with cellist Jian Wang.

2003 Antti Siirala (Finland)
Sirala's career has gone from strength to strength since winning the Leeds with concert appearances across Europe and the US, and well-received discs of Schubert and Brahms for Naxos and Ondine respectively.

2000 Alessio Bax (Italy)
Now a well-known name on the worldwide concert platform, Bax appeared on the October-November 2014 cover of *Pianist* (No 80). His discography for Signum and other labels includes duets with his pianist wife Lucille Chung.

Focus and concentration
THE MINDFUL PIANIST

In search of more focused and thoughtful practice and performance, mindfulness techniques can offer valuable support, as **Mark Tanner** explains

This article taps into themes in my new book, *The Mindful Pianist*, which includes insights from 25 expert pianists and teachers. It quickly became clear through comparing their views that mindfulness has much to offer all pianists, irrespective of age, level or preferred style of playing. I will present here some fresh ideas and approaches to help foster a more mindful approach.

Mindfulness takes myriad forms these days. Many – like my own – hold firm to a secular viewpoint, or what some like to call a 'practical meditation'. You may prefer to substitute the word 'purposeful' for 'mindful', since the pursuit of more thoughtful, focused practising underpins my approach. After all, for many adult pianists, practising alone at home probably constitutes between 80 and 90 per cent of the time spent sat at the instrument.

Whether applied to bread-making, surfing or indeed music, mindfulness addresses the need to be present and alert 'in the moment'. We can be pulled in all directions by malevolent mental chatter; allowing this to happen saps valuable energy and distracts us from our goals. Subordinate psychological forces often compel us to notice what we cannot yet manage; moreover, our impulse to self-deprecate often seems far stronger than our instinct to self-praise. Whether we happen to be unpicking knotty coordinational issues in Bach, or applying the final touches of una corda to some Grovlez, our time is precious and needs channelling accordingly.

Focus first

There needs to be a clear distinction between practising *practising*, and practising *performing*. Though each calls for a special kind of focus, pianists easily lapse into a middle ground where little is achieved. Concentration on the task at hand is vital. The same is true while performing of course, though the knack of holding concentration on stage or in an exam becomes at least as much about holding your nerve.

An ability to focus is the most important skill pianists ever learn; when we don't focus, every practice session and performance becomes a losing battle against our alter-egos.

Listen with honesty, play with confidence

If we learn to listen more intently while playing, just as a seasoned concert-goer might, we will be more likely to play to our best. 'Selective listening' deceives the pianist only, not the audience, examiner or festival adjudicator. The key to eliminating this is to apply a higher filter to what we are doing, feedback continually and respond decisively: we may hear, but are we truly *listening*? Set short, achievable goals when practising, then make sure you emerge victorious. Listening with a virtuoso's ears is surely as important as honing virtuoso fingers – this is what I mean by 'listening with honesty'.

Mindful practice

By way of example, let's take the opening page to Mozart's Sonata in G K283 (see overleaf), which is on the current ABRSM Grade 7 syllabus. Here are a few points to guide you more mindfully towards a pristine, elegant performance.

Mark Tanner is a pianist, composer, writer, ABRSM examiner, lecturer, presenter, adjudicator and teacher. His newest book is *The Mindful Pianist* (Faber), which helps pianists of all ages and persuasions to focus, practise, perform and engage more consistently. He is co-author of ABRSM's *Teaching Notes* for the 2017-18 piano syllabus and composed several pieces for ABRSM's newly released *Piano Star*, pitched at pre-Grade 1 pianists. Also published in 2016 were *Christmas Suite*, *Jazz Hands* (Books 1, 2 & 3) and *Tall Stories for Short Pianists* (Spartan Press). Mark has 20 pieces on current exam syllabuses.

5 TOP TIPS — FINDING THE FLOW STATE

1. Mindful piano playing begins with finding an inner serenity, breathing rhythmically and focusing on the job to hand.
2. Before we can engage others with our playing, we first need to engage with ourselves; devote a few minutes practice time to careful planning, then aim to connect your mind with your body.
3. Interrogate the score, but don't undervalue your own musical intelligence or instinct for spontaneity.
4. Over-practising, over-thinking and over-reaching are among the most damaging tendencies for pianists. Keep your longer-term ambitions in check and resist comparisons with others.
5. The 'flow state' for pianists is that magical moment in performance when everything comes together, finally making sense of all the methodical, mindful activities you have employed in your practising.

To find an optimum speed, do not gauge your tempo by the relaxed opening motif, but note the dramatic unison semiquaver sequence from bars 16-22. In this instance, metronome indications tell us nothing whatsoever about how the composer conceived the piece. If you can establish a happy marriage – in overall pacing – between these two contrasted musical characters (and indeed the other musical 'characters' that appear throughout the movement) your performance will acquire greater cohesion. Better, perhaps, to view this opening movement as a 'minuet', courtly and majestic. It is your ability to self-police, using keen aural skills, which will set your performance on the right track.

Sing the first few bars out loud while you play the Alberti accompaniment in the bass. Focus initially on your singing and aim to include all the marked nuances in articulation, especially the 'sighs'. Then switch your attention to the LH, which should function as more than a mere 'engine'. Listening closely will help to keep your fingers under control and underpin what is heard when you come to assemble both hands. You could experiment with finger-pedalling for the bass notes of bars 1-4 by turning them into dotted minims (G, A, F♯, G), applying subtle variants of accentuation and even gently emphasising different notes within each group of six quavers.

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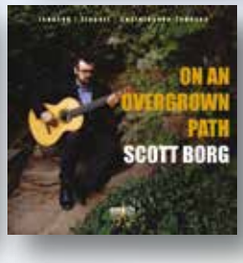

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Schoenberg – Kammersymphonie Op. 9

Pina Napolitano's exceptional interpretations of the music of Schoenberg have been praised in BBC Music Magazine for their "rare penetration, understanding, grace and elegance" (Schoenberg's Complete Piano Works, ODRCD300). Pina Napolitano's profound understanding of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto has been showcased in her recent recording of the work, ELEGY (ODRCD339). Now, an unmissable opportunity to hear Pina Napolitano playing the concerto live in the UK, alongside the outstanding musicians of Facade Ensemble performing gems from the Second Viennese School.

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Though articulation details are commonplace in Mozart's score, you will observe that phrase markings are not. A mindful approach will observe this and prompt you to reach for your pencil. The run of semiquavers at bar 8 amounts to more than a mere scale – it calls for finesse and subtle shaping, without the slightest hint of hurrying. If you feel enterprising, why not swap the hands around – just for the opening phrase – to prove to yourself you *really* know how the parts knit together?

Have you spotted Mozart's implied expressive detail? The anacruses are the rhythmic lifeblood of this opening page, but notice how much more elegant your phrasing sounds if you slightly accent the *third* beats of bars 1 and 3 as you slur across the bar lines, instead of the more commonly emphasised first beats. Now consider adding a little dynamic interest. An obvious place for a crescendo (or indeed, a series of ever-building crescendos) is bars 16-22, where the LH has bold, 'operatic' octaves.

Guard against chopping up the lines: a bar-by-bar 'syllabic' approach is the kiss of death in Mozart. Done well, the whole page should take shape as if the *forte* arrival at the dominant, bar 22, is the most logical, natural thing in the world.

At all points in the learning and performance of this innocuous looking page of music, a mindful, attentive approach will guide you forwards with clarity, insight and control. Practice time will be more profitable and satisfying as you lock horns confidently with the details (rather than sigh in resignation), and you will saunter from the practice room feeling contented and excited at what you might achieve tomorrow.

Opening of Mozart Sonata in G K283

Over-practising, over-thinking and over-reaching

Over-practising is surprisingly prevalent among serious-minded adult pianists. Ten minutes spent with sharpened focus is worth more than several hours of absent-minded thrashing about. Most of us would accept this premise, and yet it is my experience that pianists – even or especially advanced ones – sometimes derive masochistic pleasure from coming away from the practice room glazed in sweat, veins popping. Our practising ought not to resemble a gym workout, for piano playing needs to be an artistic, creative and mindful pursuit at all times, even when surveying the notes of a new piece for the first time.

> An ability to focus is the most important skill pianists ever learn

Over-thinking is also common. If we underestimate our own musical intelligence and underplay our capacity for spontaneous risk-taking, we end up losing that spark of inventiveness without which our playing sounds sterile and lacklustre.

Over-reaching, in regard to choosing repertoire especially, undermines pianists of all ages. A willingness to place to one side overly challenging, unrealistic pieces, in favour of repertoire which taps into our current musical and technical attributes, will set us apart from the crowd.

Remember to breathe

Because piano playing does not feed directly from our need to breathe, in stark contrast with a flautist, we may easily overlook the need to fuel the brain and keep the heart-rate in check. Moreover, if we can learn to breathe in places where, say, a singer might choose to, our physical being will become more consistently entwined with our musical responsiveness.

With good reason, mindfulness activities conventionally place an emphasis on steady, regulated breathing. Consider starting each practice session with a few minutes of calm repose, eyes closed. Imagine aligning each measured inner breath with a skier preparing to move from the top of a mountain: a long, slow outward breath can then coincide with our imaginary skier as s/he begins a gradual descent.

Now coincide an imagined raising of the 3rd finger with your next inhalation and allow it to descend to an imaginary key as you breathe out. 'Listen' to the note as it dissolves like snow. Next, the breathing can match up with a 'real' note on the piano – eyes still closed,

RIBBONS AND PERFUME

Mark Tanner finds that a mindful approach unties some tricky knots in 3 scores in this month's issue

1 **Trad arr. Scaife *Amazing Grace*** [page 32]: Among the many features of interest in this delightfully approachable arrangement, it is worth rehearsing the triplet figurations (bar 9, 13 etc.) in isolation. This is to make sure that they do not sound either crushed in, or as three 'straight' quavers following a dotted crotchet. If anything, they can be permitted to sound fractionally on the lazy side, just as a singer might approach them. Savour the bass line, which holds much of value. Take note of the editorial fingerings, which if nothing else should be read as an indication not to trust legato to the pedal. The pedal markings are there to provide warmth and colour, not to make up for carelessness.

2 **MacDowell *Beauty in the Rose Garden*** [page 39]: Once the nonchalant melodic line is under control (which will require your most deft fingerwork), keep in mind the need for a subtle management of the texture. Notice how specific the composer's markings are, and in particular the call for both sostenuto and flutter-pedalling from bar 51 to the end. Pianists pedal best with their ears, not by following the hypnotically copious horizontal lines given in the score. Listen for nuance, and invest time in those places where trickier decisions over voicing need to be made. Among these are the sensual chromaticism marked 'sadly' at bar 39 and the aromatic chords which tie the piece up with a pink ribbon, at bars 57-58.

3 **Debussy *Serenade for the Doll*** [page 56]: There is nothing childish about the suite of six pieces which make up Debussy's *Children's Corner*. Indeed, 'Serenade for the Doll' is a sophisticated miniature, full of a lightness and grace which poses challenges for any pianist, especially as regards pedalling and balance. The mindful pianist will take care to distinguish between the unhurried, reggae-like, off-beat accompanimental quavers which populate the first half of the piece, and the more deliberate-sounding figurations from bar 66 onwards. The grace notes ought not to sound overly dry or Scarlatti-esque; think of them as puffs of musical perfume, best achieved by keeping the supplest wrists imaginable.

ears tracing the sound until it has completely disappeared. Activities of this kind are both mindful and of immeasurable practical benefit to our practice. We are, in effect, not only practising in our head, but uniting our mental and physical resources.

Flow State

The white heat of a compelling performance is born of hard graft and concentrated periods of study. Paradoxically, our preoccupation with getting notes under our fingers and into our memory often drains our capacity to let go and become one with what we are playing. Once those hours of careful spadework are behind us, it is time to galvanise our technique, musical instincts and emotional impulses in pursuit of that elusive 'flow state'.

Pausing between repetitions is at least as important as the repetitions themselves, but only if we use these pauses to reflect upon what we are doing, recalibrate and reignite our enthusiasm. We should not confuse long periods of calorie-burning with creative, thoughtful practice. We call what we do piano *playing*, not piano *working*, and yet our capacity to enjoy playing is directly influenced by how effective and mindful we are in our work.

Try to savour each passing moment of your practice and don't wish your life away by focusing on a) what might happen if you make mistakes, or b) how much better other people seem able to play. Savour the here and now, and resist dreaming of what lies ahead in an exam or concert performance. By prizing an engaging, beautiful piano sound above other more ephemeral aspects of playing, we become more at ease with ourselves and our music. ■

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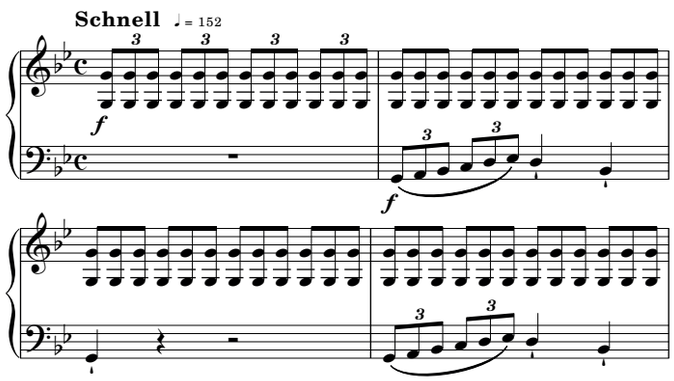
Problems solved
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Pianist readers have been sending in their technical queries, from repeated octaves to tricky tremolo. **Graham Fitch** finds that muscular freedom often holds the answers

In the past few issues of the magazine, I have invited readers to submit their questions about aspects of piano playing or specific pieces where they need help. I am very happy to address three readers' questions here. You may also like to watch the video that complements this article, where I demonstrate my practical answers.

Repeated octaves in *Der Erlkönig* arr. Liszt

Schubert wrote *Der Erlkönig* in 1815 to a text by Goethe. The song describes a frantic journey on horseback of a father who is holding his sick young son, trying to get back home safely. In the end, the child dies. Whether you play the original song accompaniment or the transcription by Liszt, you are faced by the same technical challenge: how to manage the fast, relentless repeated RH octaves without tiring. These octaves describe the galloping of the horse's hooves, and the panic of the father, and are far from easy to bring off.



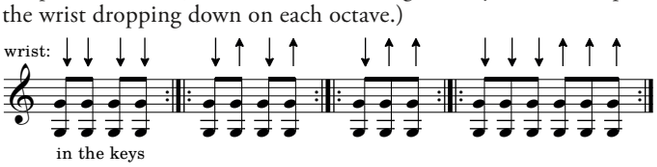
There are two technical elements to achieving Schubert's demands in the repeated octaves, and both are applicable to many other passages of piano music with fast repeated octaves. The first is to find the place in the lower part of the key's descent, around the sounding point, *and stay there* as we repeat the octaves. Of paramount importance when managing repeated notes is not to bring the keys all the way back up to the top (the same applies to trills). On a grand piano, thanks to the double escapement mechanism (invented by Sébastien Érard in 1821), we don't need to lift the key all the way to the surface to repeat it; we need lift it only about halfway up in order to play it again. This means we can repeat a note very efficiently using a smaller range of motion and without any gap in the sound. Upright pianos generally do not work this way, unfortunately, although some manufacturers have addressed the issue.

The second technical element is to find a way to keep mobile and muscularly free in the arm so we don't cramp up. We can do this by adding a wave in the arm. It helps to think of playing each octave using a different spot on the key surface, back and forth (a small range of motion towards the fallboard and back out again). As we move towards the back of the keyboard, there is a gentle rising up in the wrist and forearm; as we move back towards the body the arm lowers (thus in and up, out and down).

Here is a preliminary exercise in controlling the necessary motions. Begin by dropping the octave from the key surface and come back up again – but not all the way to the top of the key. As you repeat this slowly, it will feel like a vibration in the arm. Notice you are not producing any sound on the upward part of the motion, only on the downward part. When you are comfortable, use the upward movement to add another repeated octave. So that's one octave on the downward part of the motion and another octave on the upward part.

Pianist, teacher, writer and adjudicator Graham Fitch gives masterclasses and workshops on piano playing internationally, and is in high demand as a private teacher in London. Graham is a regular tutor at the Summer School for Pianists in Walsall and also a tutor for the Piano Teachers' Course EPTA (UK). He writes a popular piano blog, www.practisingthepiano.com and has recently launched an online piano academy.

Next, try one drop followed by two releases (measure them carefully so that the speed and range of motion is the same on the way down as on the way up). After you're comfortable with this, play three down followed by three up. The next stage is to programme six down and six up before allowing the motions to blend into a smooth, undulating wave. This is how the process looks. (Note: the first bar is a good way to start the process, with the wrist dropping down on each octave.)



Left hand tremolo in Beethoven's 'Pathétique' Sonata Op 13

One reader was struggling to control the LH tremolo at the start of the first movement of this sonata:

I am often asked about this particular tremolo. There are two aspects to consider, one rhythmical and the other technical. The first thing to appreciate is that the tremolo is precisely measured in quavers (eighth notes). From the second bar, Beethoven moves to the conventional way of notating a tremolo, but in fact all subsequent bars need to sound in quavers in exactly the same way as the first bar. When you practise the passage slowly,

you are able to check that the LH 5th finger marks each crotchet (quarter note) beat clearly. It is helpful to play the RH together with the LH 5th finger (minus the thumb) to secure the beat. Listen and feel the 5th finger coinciding with the RH exactly. For the first four bars, you might try depressing the thumb C silently and holding onto it loosely while playing the 5th finger.

To develop the correct technique for the tremolo, we need to use forearm rotation (as opposed to articulated finger movements). Provided the fingers are firm enough (not floppy), the rotary movements will send the keys down; there is no need to raise the fingers from the knuckle joints. To get the sense of the rotations, play the octave C with both notes together. Hold onto the 5th finger (the 5th finger side of the hand is going to feel like a hinge), and play the thumb note rhythmically a few times. As you rotate from the forearm, the thumb will swing upwards into the air before it re-engages with the key. One further thing to watch for, as you bounce the thumb, is to keep the elbow in one spot (it mustn't wiggle from side to side).

Let's now experience the rotation the other way round. Holding onto the thumb note (and keeping your elbow in one place), rotate towards the 5th finger a few times. You'll probably have noticed the range of motion on the 5th finger side is smaller than in the other direction. Don't worry, this is quite normal. Now that you have experienced how free the rotary movements can feel, play the tremolo rather slowly, making sure to keep it rhythmical. Aim to keep the range of motion equal as you swing one way and then the other. As you bring the tremolo up to tempo, you will sense the movement becoming smaller and smaller.

You may find it helpful to practise a simple exercise to develop freedom in tremolos. I suggest a tremolo scale in octaves in divisions of six (accenting the 5th finger and thumb in alternation improves stability). If you are feeling adventurous, consider joining in with the RH in symmetrical inversion, so both hands develop the same skill equally. (See my article on using symmetry in practice in *Pianist* 93).

You might also practise this exercise in the following rhythms: *slow*-quick-quick and quick-quick-*slow*.

Freedom in the LH in Czerny's Study Op 740 No 8

Our reader complained that, despite using forearm rotation, she was still finding her left arm was getting tight.

Even though the LH is the technical focus of the study, it is still an accompaniment to the RH. Therefore, I would suggest starting with the foreground and firstly making sure your RH part has been built beautifully. It is all too easy to neglect this! The melody line needs to be shaped and projected; use chord legato wherever possible to make the connections (don't rely on the pedal to make all the joins – you'll need to use the pedal carefully and sparingly to avoid muddying the texture). Focusing on the first phrase in the RH, here's how a chord legato looks when written out literally:

It is obviously not possible for me to pinpoint the exact source of your LH tension without looking at your playing, but I suspect it might be coming from keeping your hand stretched out after playing the 5th finger notes. Your rational brain might be telling you that, since the 5th finger is needed again very soon on the low bass notes, it makes sense to keep it stretched out so it will be ready in position. This stretch, far from helping you, is going to cause tension problems from the beginning. In order for the next part of the LH figuration to work (the chromatic dip from thumb to 2nd finger and back), the 5th finger needs to be brought back to join the rest of the hand (rather than being held outwards), springing back out at the last microsecond to catch the next bass note. A good exercise for practice is to extend Czerny's LH pattern, giving more time to experience the closing of the hand:

Another practice strategy is to stop on the 2nd finger. As you come to rest on the key, check that your hand and arm are balanced on the 2nd finger and the hand is closed.

There is a potential problem in bar 4, where we have to put the short fingers (5th and thumb) on black notes on the second and fourth beats. There are really only two ways to manage this, by either twisting the hand from the wrist (tension-producing and inefficient) or adjusting our position by moving in towards the back of the keyboard and out again to accommodate the black-and-white terrain of the passage (natural and comfortable).

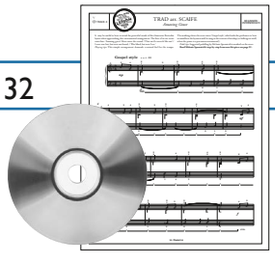
Let's look at the choreography of how this works. As you play the three-note groups between thumb and 2nd finger – E-D♯-E (first beat) and G-F♯-G (third beat) – allow the arm to travel a short distance towards the back of the key (in the direction of the fallboard). As you slide back you will sense the second thumb note is a few millimetres further towards the back of the key than the first one. This brings the 5th finger into alignment with the black key it needs to play next with no need to twist in the wrist, and the thumb will be in position too. There is a small adjustment back out again (towards the body) at the very end of the second and fourth beats – I sense it happening between the thumb (black note) and 5th finger (white note). The distances involved are very small but they make all the difference between a smooth and comfortable execution of the LH and an awkward and uncoordinated one. Remember – if you tense up in this bar, you will probably bring tension into the next bar and will struggle to keep any sense of fluency going forwards. ■

In the next issue, Graham Fitch focuses on the wrist.

@ GET IN TOUCH

Graham Fitch would like to hear from readers who have piano-playing questions, whether about a certain technique or a passage in a piece of music. Please write to the editor at ***editor@pianistmagazine.com***.

FULL SCORES ON PAGE 32



TRAD ARR. SCAIFE
Amazing Grace

A new arrangement of a classic hymn brings out the bluesy, gospel-style character of the original melody, as **Melanie Spanswick** explains

Ability rating Beginner/Intermediate

Info	Will improve your
Key: F major	✓ Legato
Tempo: 'Gospel style'	✓ Cantabile
Style: Modern	✓ Chordal playing

A violent mid-Atlantic storm in 1748 prompted the conversion of a sailor, John Newton. He was a conscript in the British Navy who later became an Anglican clergyman and poet. As a curate back home in England, he wrote the inspiring words of *Amazing Grace*, which was first published in a 1779 hymnbook. Some decades later the hymn became associated with an older American folk tune, known as 'New Britain', to which it is sung today.

This delightful arrangement lies comfortably under the hands. Harmonic twists and turns offer plenty of interest to the pianist whether or not they are familiar with other harmonisations. The 'Gospel style' tempo marking suggests an easy-going strain of expression, and the metronome mark of crotchet equals 88 can probably be relaxed if necessary. This three-part transcription (two parts in the RH and one part in the LH) is faithful to the popular character of the Deep South hymnbooks in which *Amazing Grace* first became known.

As always, begin by practising hands separately. This will be especially useful when working at chords. My suggested fingering aims to encourage legato playing as much as possible. Start by locating the notes in the LH, learning note positions and fingering without worrying about a rhythmic pulse. Then add a firm, steady three beats in a bar, counting out loud as you play.

When working at the RH, separate each part. Play the melody (top line) on its own, being careful to use the same fingering with which you will play the piece in full. Now focus on the lower part alone, observing finger and position changes. When both parts are secure, play them at the same time, slowly, watching how they fit together. Balance between the hands should be weighted to the RH melody line, so aim to keep the LH and RH lower parts soft and light in their secondary roles.

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Melanie Spanswick is a pianist, author and music educator. Her piano guidebook, *So You Want To Play The Piano?*, is republished in a second edition by Alfred Music. Melanie recently selected the repertoire for *The Faber Music Piano Anthology*. She regularly conducts workshops in Germany as well as for EPTA, and is a tutor at Jackdaws Music Education Trust. Melanie adjudicates for the British and International Federation of Festivals and curated the Classical Conversations Series, where she interviewed many eminent classical pianists on camera (published on YouTube).
Find out more about Melanie at www.melaniespanswick.com.

The aim of legato technique is to join one note smoothly to the next, without a break or a gap. On the piano, the fingers must achieve this by changing or swapping fingers on the same note. This technique – which is often called finger substitution – is required on several occasions, particularly in the bass part, where a continuous sound is important in supporting the LH melody.

An example of finger substitution occurs in bar 21. The first D in the LH (a crotchet) is played by the 2nd finger if the proceeding C is played with the thumb, as suggested. For successful legato, the 2nd finger will rotate over the thumb (between bar 20 and 21) to play the crotchet D on the first beat of bar 21, and immediately change to a thumb on the same note, so the second D in bar 21, a minim, can also be smoothly joined. While the D is depressed, swivel the thumb into position on the D (next to the 2nd finger), and swiftly swap fingers, so that the fingers have shifted but the key stays down and doesn't sound again.

These finger changes become second nature with practice. They create a legato sound without undue reliance on the sustaining pedal. Try to play the entire arrangement by joining fingers and holding onto notes wherever possible; this will reduce lumpy, uneven playing, and make the melody smooth and songful. In bars 1 and 2, hold the RH notes until the last moment, avoiding gaps or holes in the sound. Play the C and F in bar 1 using the 2nd finger (on the F) and thumb (on the C). The F requires a richer sound, so that it rings out effortlessly until the F on the third beat. At the end of the minim F (first beat of the bar, played with the 2nd finger), change quickly to the 3rd finger, playing the F again on the last beat of bar 1, swapping fingers in a millisecond, but matching the tone to that of the previous dying note (the crotchet F on the first beat).

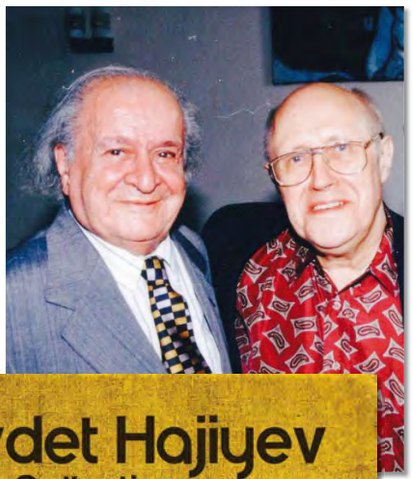
Learning Tip

Rubato (expressive rhythmic freedom) brings a lovely singing cantabile to this hymn, but use it with discretion.

Flexible wrist and hand movements join notes together more smoothly. This is particularly helpful for when the chords change position in the RH: at bar 19, for example. Good legato technique demands attentive listening. Where joining fingers is impossible, the sustaining pedal will add resonance; it can be employed throughout this piece, as marked in the score.

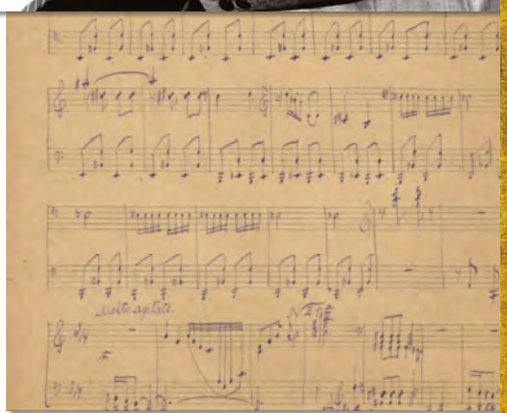
Other techniques will also help you to enhance a rich cantabile tone in the melody line. Play deeply into the key bed with the pads of the fingers; use the weight of your arm through a flexible wrist motion; ensure a fuller sound on longer notes and a lighter timbre on quick notes such as the triplet figurations. Give shape to each four-bar phrase by deciding where the top or most important part of the phrase occurs, and colour it with specific sound or articulation accordingly. The climax at bars 15-17 is just one example.

Chromatic harmony lends a piquant flavour to the arrangement. For example, you could bring out the harmonic progression at bars 18-20 and consider using a tenuto (held) effect to impart a gospel-style swing to the notes which are articulated separately from the chords, such as the triplet in bar 21. A long ritenuto from bar 27 brings this arrangement to a tranquil close. ■



Jevdet Hajiyev with Mstislav Rostropovich

Jevdet Hajiyev with Dmitry Shostakovich



Jevdet Hajiyev's hand-written score of the 24th Prelude, age 18

"Jevdet Hajiyev is a truly talented composer with a unique ability in writing music of symphonic depth and philosophical content."
D. Shostakovich

Centenary Celebrations for Jevdet Hajiyev

Hailed by Dmitri Shostakovich as his 'ingenious successor', Jevdet Hajiyev (1917-2002) is regarded as one of the leading composers of classical music in Azerbaijan. To celebrate the centenary of his birth, Muradov Family Archive has just released a *Piano Collection* Book 1. A series of concerts will be held in some of the finest concert halls around the world, including Carnegie Hall on April 5th, 2017.

Hajiyev drew his inspiration from the grand art of Azerbaijani *mugham* and *ashiqs* as well as the sounds of traditional Azerbaijani folk instruments, such as the *tar* (plucked lute), *kemancha* (spike fiddle) and *saz* (a long-necked folk lute).

The organic fusion between classical form and folk music in Hajiyev's compositions is groundbreaking as it delivers unique intonations, melodies and harmonies to the Azerbaijani symphonic classical music genre.

Hajiyev's legacy includes eight symphonies, three poems, the opera *Veten (Motherland)* written in collaboration with Gara Garayev, string quartets, a ballade and sonata for piano, and choral and vocal works, to name but a few. These works are treasures of classical music that will continue to delight audiences around the world.

For more information and to order *Piano Collection*, please visit elenacobb.com

SAINT-SAËNS ARR. SILOTI

The Swan

Unruffled grace, dynamic sensitivity and a legato touch will get you to the heart of this magical elegy, explains **Lucy Parham**

Ability rating Advanced

Info	Will improve your
Key: G major	✓ Cantabile style
Tempo: Adagio	✓ Balance within each part
Style: Romantic	✓ Ability to create different colours

Firstly, look at or listen to the original score. 'The Swan' is the penultimate movement of *The Carnival of the Animals*, the 'grand zoological fantasy' written within a few days in 1887 by Camille Saint-Saëns while on holiday in Austria. In the original, the piano plays the flowing semiquavers and a cello spins the luminous melody over the top of it. It is a favourite piece for cellists and has been choreographed into a poignant ballet solo entitled 'The Dying Swan'. This transcription was made by the Russian pianist and pedagogue Alexander Siloti.

Played well, 'The Swan' has a spellbinding effect. While not one of the most technically challenging pieces I have featured in the advanced level section of the How to Play series (you may welcome a rest after Liszt's *Un sospiro* in *Pianist* 93), it is hauntingly beautiful and it can often be heard in piano recitals as an encore. However, to gain the freedom to do the piece and yourself full justice, you need to master the work perfectly. Cantabile is a key quality here, as is finding a good balance both between the parts and between the hands.

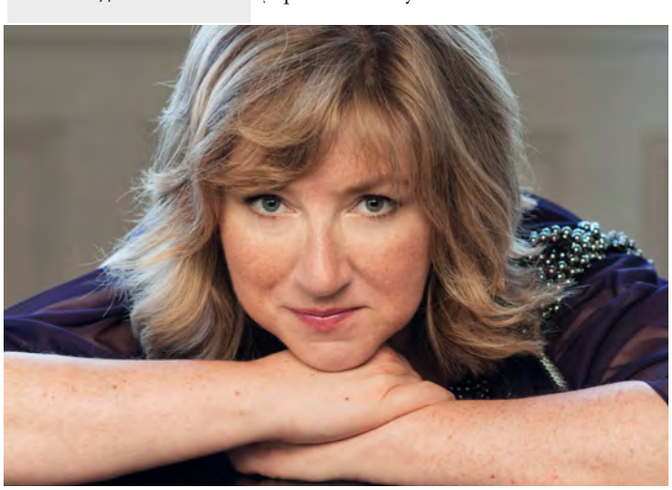
My first piece of advice is to learn the LH alone first. Then add the RH melody, omitting the semiquaver accompaniment. This will help you to find the basic structure and skeleton of the piece before adding the harder-to-handle semiquavers.

Note the Adagio tempo. The piece should sound flowing, but never hurried. Think of the swan gliding elegantly over a lake. The metronome marking of crotchet equals 72 should be helpful. The LH figuration in bar 1 recurs throughout the piece. Play it legatissimo, with fingers close to the keys, as if you have overlapping contact with the key bed at all times. The RH G major arpeggio figure (using a fingering of 1-2-5-4) should be measured and perfectly even. Imagine drawing small circles with your elbow for every four semiquavers. You may wish to practice this figure in all the major keys in order to achieve perfect legato and touch.

Lucy Parham performs *Elégie – Rachmaninoff: A Heart in Exile* at the Salisbury Playhouse on 21 January 2017 with narrator Henry Goodman. They also perform *Elégie* at the Quarry, Bedford on 26 February. Throughout February, Parham tours *Rêverie – The life and loves of Claude Debussy* with narrator Simon Russell Beale. Performances include Richmond Theatre (17th), The Regent, Dorset (19th) and Theatre Royal, Brighton (22nd). Her CD *Rêverie – the life and loves of Claude Debussy* has recently been released on the Deux-Elles label with narrator Alex Jennings. For full details, visit www.lucyparham.com

Make a well-judged diminuendo at the end of the first bar. This should prepare for the first statement of the melody. In order to avoid getting stiff and tight in the RH, it is important to remember to keep the elbow flexible and fluid at all times as tension here will result in tension in projecting the melody. Siloti marks the melody to be always singing and expressive, but remember that it is only *piano* at this point, and we need to pace the level of crescendo and dynamics as the piece progresses. Note how the melody comes in groups of three crotchets at a time. This means that the last note of each group needs to be a little lighter than the preceding two. Another way to practise this opening is to play the accompanimental parts and sing the melody at the same time.

Aim your phrasing towards the first note of bar 3, the minim A. Imagine sustaining it as if you were bowing the note on a cello, as Saint-Saëns originally wrote. The pedal can help with this and it is therefore important to keep it down for each half bar as marked. When the B in the LH takes over from the RH A, make sure you match the sound. This applies when you then hand the melody back to the RH again. In bar 4 there is a real sense of direction and flow, so you should be thinking of this bar as being one long phrase and not a series of quaver melody notes.



The minim B at the start of bar 5 needs the full weight of the arm. This note brings the climax of the first phrase: sink into it and then grade the accompanying semiquavers with a perfect decrescendo for the rest of the bar. The phrase is repeated but the RH A♯ at the start of bar 7 has much more melodic significance, so give it a special colour.

Learning Tip

Learn the LH alone and then add the RH melody (omitting the semiquaver accompaniment).

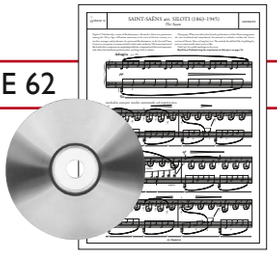
In bar 8 be aware that the first three quavers in the LH are not melody notes and need to be balanced accordingly. I suggest leaving the pedal down for half a bar here, although you may want to flutter it a little.

Broaden slightly through bar 8, especially the last three quavers. This movement will take you over the barline into bar 9, the top of the phrase. Sink into this top D melody note (RH, dotted minim) and use the accompanying semiquaver figures to make a gradual decrescendo. These RH semiquavers need to be kept close to the keys, with bent fingertips, so that each note sounds clearly. Leave the pedal down for the whole bar as you want to keep the low B bass note resonating in the harmony. You should hold the top D melody note in your mind as you move into bar 10. From bars 10 to 11, gently highlight the LH 5th finger on its descent (B, B♭, A), and apply a gentle pressure to the bass line at this point. The RH should gradually tail away from the minim D at the start of bar 11.

Bars 12-13 could have another colour. You could make more of an echo effect in the two preceding bars. But you certainly need to reach a magical *piano* dynamic in bar 14, as this is a special moment in the piece. When the melody is repeated in bar 16, aim for a warm *mezzo forte* and drive through the C♯ minim in the middle of the bar, before using the following semiquavers to make a crescendo which should build to the *forte* RH F dotted minim at the start of bar 17.

© Sven Arnstein

FULL SCORE ON PAGE 62



Notice how the top notes are highlighted at the end of bar 17. This is the first time in the piece where the accompaniment takes the form of an inner melody. 'Point' these notes lightly as they are not meant to overshadow the melody.

weave your magic here! Enjoy the RH single crotchets that stand alone at the end of bar 23, and change the pedal on the final G in order to keep the melody clean and not blurred. Feel the LH pass its quavers at the start of bar 24 smoothly and

Siloti marks the melody to be always singing and expressive, but you should observe the *piano* dynamic

Combine this effect with a perfectly judged ritenuto by way of making a return to the main theme in bar 18. This time, however, the melody is marked *pianissimo*. Imagine that you are hearing it from afar, almost with a muted tone. You could use the una corda pedal here, too.

The reprise is varied in bar 21 with an accented B. This is played on the cello as one long note, sustained through the bar. To recreate the effect on the piano, Siloti has repeated the note. Use the LH to help you to crescendo through this bar, paying particular attention to the 5th finger descending bass line. The first note of bar 22 (RH) is the most expressive note of the piece, so play it with especial love and care!

From now on the piece conveys a sense of ebbing away. It is as if the swan has simply glided off to another lake. These sublime bars should not be hurried in any way. You need to

directly to the single-note crotchets in the RH in the second half of the bar. There should be a good feeling of transference, without any bumps. The tempo becomes gradually slower, with indications of calando, ritardando and lento, until the piece winds down to nothing.

In bars 26 and 27 you reach 'a tempo'. This passage should be kept steady: save a concluding ritenuto for the final group of semiquavers. I would suggest mastering the LH by itself first in these two bars. Keep your fingers close to the key bed and notice the pattern (every eight quavers you are an octave lower and the pattern is repeated). The RH needs to be very soft, and you could use the una corda to create a more muted effect. The pedal can be left down, or flutter it a little if it sounds too much. A flexible right foot is key here. Release the final pedal slowly to let the sound die away. ■

Alexander Siloti

Once upon a time, the mention of Alexander Siloti's name was accompanied in certain musical circles by a sniff or a frown. He recast the slow movement of Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto and reduced its length by half in an attempt (largely fruitless) to popularise the piece. These days, however, Tchaikovsky's original is preferred, and Siloti is much better remembered as a friend and musical partner to his fellow Russian-US emigré Rachmaninov (both men pictured above, Siloti on the left), and as a sovereign pianist who studied with Nikolai Rubinstein and worked with Franz Liszt. Having emigrated to New York, he taught at the Juilliard School of Music from 1925 until three years before his death in 1945. A few recordings of his own playing survive (in poor sound); some available on YouTube, where you may also find Siloti's daughter, Mary Alberta Siloti, playing *The Swan* on a rickety instrument but to the manner born.

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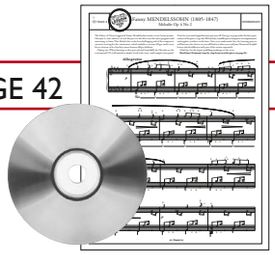
FULL SCORE ON PAGE 42



FANNY MENDELSSOHN

Melodie Op 4 No 2

Let a dark and tragic key signature be your guide to the ruminative mood of this song without words, says **Janet Newman**

Ability rating Intermediate

Info
Key: C♯ minor
Tempo: Allegretto
Style: Early Romantic

Will improve your
✓ Balance between the hands
✓ Finger substitution technique
✓ Variety in tone

In childhood, Fanny Mendelssohn was considered no less precocious a musical talent than her brother Felix. She was 'extraordinarily gifted' according to Ignaz Moscheles, the pianist and a close friend of the highly cultivated Mendelssohn family. Carl Friedrich Zelter taught both children, and described Fanny to Goethe as 'really something special'. Influenced by the dominant attitudes of their time, her father and in particular her brother encouraged her to compose but deterred her from publishing her work and making a career in music. However, she wrote music throughout her life, and left at least 460 separate works after her death in 1847 following a stroke. The depth of Felix's grief at her passing may well have contributed to the strokes which killed him less than six months later.

Give each phrase its own shape with rubato, and keep listening to your playing as you practise

Fanny wrote several collections of instrumental songs. Some of them probably predate Felix's own Songs without Words, and this example has a particularly affecting sense of the singing style inherent within the lovely melodic line. I love the key of C♯ minor: it has a dark, melancholy quality, and is often associated by composers with dark and tragic moods: think of Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata, Chopin's Nocturne No 20 and the slow movement of Schubert's B♭ major Sonata D960. This Romantic miniature may not be in their league, but it has a poetry all of its own.

First, consider the tempo. The time signature is 6/8, which should have a pulse of two in a bar rather than six separate quavers, as that would feel rather leaden. Practise more slowly until the notes are under your fingers, but aim to bring your speed up towards a two-in-a-bar pulse in order to give a sense of forward momentum. A tempo of dotted crotchet equals 50 seems to be about right.

Janet Newman is Head of Keyboard at the Royal Grammar School in Guildford. In addition to her teaching, she is in demand as a freelance pianist and is an examiner for the ABRSM.

Then look at the three layers of texture. Among the key considerations in this piece is the balance between the lines. The music is written in differing textures, and the melody is one of the most important lines to project. Then comes the bass line (which is written in crotchets throughout), and the accompanying semiquavers add to and complete the complexities of the harmony. The rich sonority created by these layers can quickly become unclear or muddy, especially if there is any sense of 'grabbing' at the pedal changes, which should be played as smoothly as possible.

To help you differentiate the layers of the piece, practise the top line alone. Stick to the fingering you've decided upon – which should be mostly the 5th, 4th and occasionally the 3rd finger. When it comes to finger substitution (5, 4-5, 4 for example), take individual passages out of context and work on them separately until there is a confident flexibility to your playing, making sure that you grip into the keys. Take your time, and use the slight 'give' in tempo to express the music – there's no need to rush! Once the melody line is mastered, add the bass line and begin to build up the structure of the piece. It's also a good idea at this point to add the pedal part, so that you become used to moving your foot in the correct place. Avoid any nervousness or urgency in a ruminative piece such as this; allow plenty of musical space in which to lift and depress the pedal.

Practise the bass and semiquaver accompaniment (plus the pedal) separately. This will help you create an unobtrusive and even texture. Keep your arms as free of tension as possible, and if you sense any tendency to snatch at the bass note, try practising from the preceding quaver beat. While bearing in mind the flowing pace of this Allegretto, give each phrase its own shape with some flexible rubato, and keep listening to your playing as you practise.

Once the technical issues are under control, you can work on shaping and expressing the musical character. The piece is dynamically muted almost throughout, with only one main climax when the theme returns at bar 25. Within these limits, the tone can ebb and flow – rather as the phrases do – so make sure that there is variety to your sound. The phrase-ends at bars 7-8, 15-16 and 31-32 have a hesitant character: linger over these bars, as if they are asking a question. The answering phrases open with a sense of hesitancy, which contributes to the reflective and somewhat sad character of the piece. At the end of the first section (bar 12), it seems natural to make a ritenuto before moving into the more positive A major section at bar 13. These minor-major shifts recur in bar 25 as well as the ending: they need time to expand and develop as they contain much of the expressive sentiment of the piece.

Learning Tip

As you are playing, think in long, sweeping phrases, especially since you have spent a lot of time practising in precise detail!

The Melodie has a slightly disappointing conclusion. I feel that the harmony is badly written – the C♯ RH semiquaver at the end of the penultimate bar almost feels as though it's a wrong note, which makes the ending tentative, to say the least! Setting that reservation aside, this is a sensitive and enjoyable piece, offering a range of technical and expressive challenges to any pianist. ■

Sister act

Fanny Mendelssohn wrote much else of great charm and appeal to the intermediate-standard pianist. For a Romantically yearning contrast to this Melodie, try the Song without Words Op 8 No 3. More advanced pianists should look out *Das Jahr* (The Year), a set of 12 imaginative pieces inspired by the character of each month and predating Tchaikovsky's cycle of *The Seasons* by some 35 years.

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Tim Stein and **John Maul** have recorded more than 30 video lessons for *Pianist*, all devoted to the basics of learning the piano. Perfect for the beginner pianist! Tim's most recent lessons have been on slurs, rhythm and using the thumb. Past video lessons include the basics of chord playing, sight-reading, fingering for beginners, how to sit, geography of the keyboard and more. These beginner-level lessons are demonstrated on a Roland digital piano.

Graham Fitch gives his lessons for intermediate and advanced pianists. There are over 35 of his masterclasses on the *Pianist* channel, and more continue to be added. Graham's subjects include pedalling, chords, passagework, arpeggios, ornaments, voicing and different touches. Graham's lessons come directly from Steinway Hall, London, where he demonstrates on a Model D concert grand.

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Quick guide to UK/North American note value terminology

𝅝 = **semibreve**/whole note
𝅗𝅥 = **minim**/half note
♩ = **crotchet**/quarter note
♪ = **quaver**/eighth note
♬ = **semiquaver**/16th note
𝅘𝅥𝅯 = **demisemiquaver**/32nd note

TRACK 1

Cornelius GURLITT (1820-1901)

Cradle Song, No 17 from *The First Lessons* Op 117

BEGINNER

Cornelius Gurlitt won success as a performer and teacher in Copenhagen, Rome and Leipzig before returning to his birthplace of Altona to end his career as a bandmaster. His *First Lessons* include a lively 'Back to School' and 'Hunt'.

Playing tips: This sweet piece needs to sound tender and all-enveloping. Count the pulse silently for about three bars before you begin. This will help you to attain an even, steady tempo. It is most important to keep in time, making sure not to slow down or speed up. Note how the dynamics do not rise above *mezzo forte*. Aside from the crescendo and diminuendo in bar 3 and the diminuendo at bar 12, the mood is one of total calmness. Pedal is not required.

Take a look at the technical tips within the score.

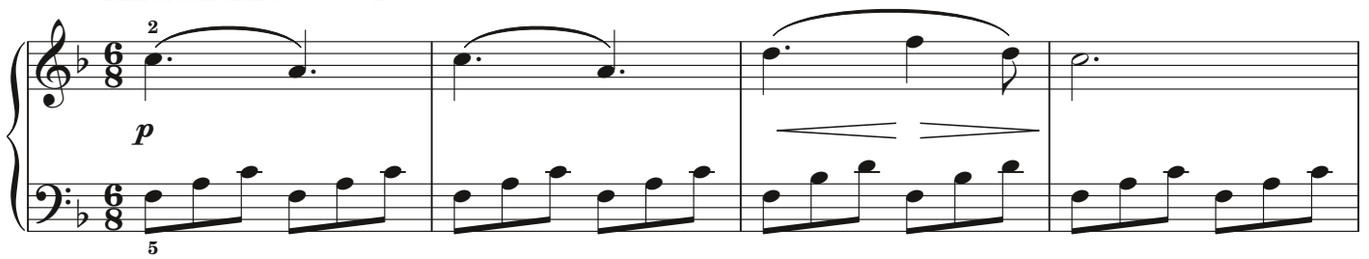
Find a good, gentle tempo before you begin.

In order to produce a warm, singing tone in the RH, dig the fingers deep into the keys.

Aim to phrase bar 3 beautifully. Try singing it first!

Andantino ♩. = 72

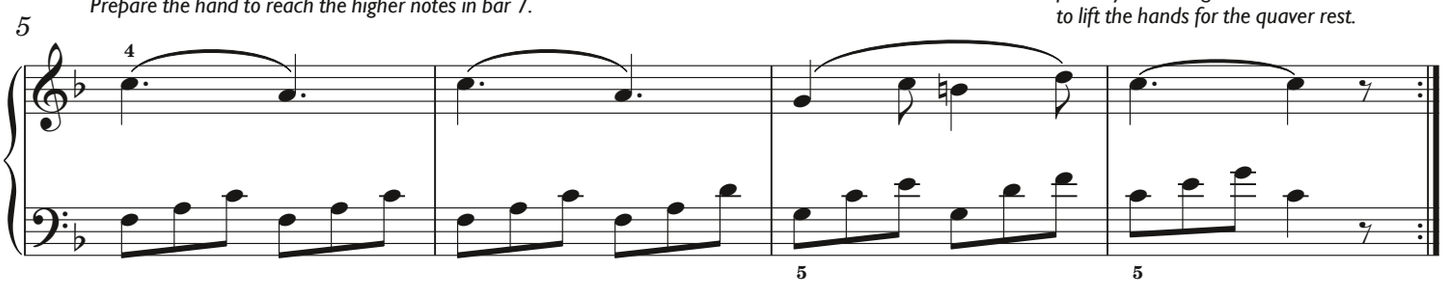
The key is F major.



The LH notes should be calm and steady, with a slight emphasis on the first beat of the bar. Take special care with the thumb, making sure it doesn't stand out.

Notice the change of fingering over the C in bar 5 (now with the 4th finger and not the 2nd). Prepare the hand to reach the higher notes in bar 7.

Round off this first 8-bar section elegantly, possibly with a slight crescendo. Remember to lift the hands for the quaver rest.



Prepare the LH for the quick upward shift to the C at the beginning of bar 8.

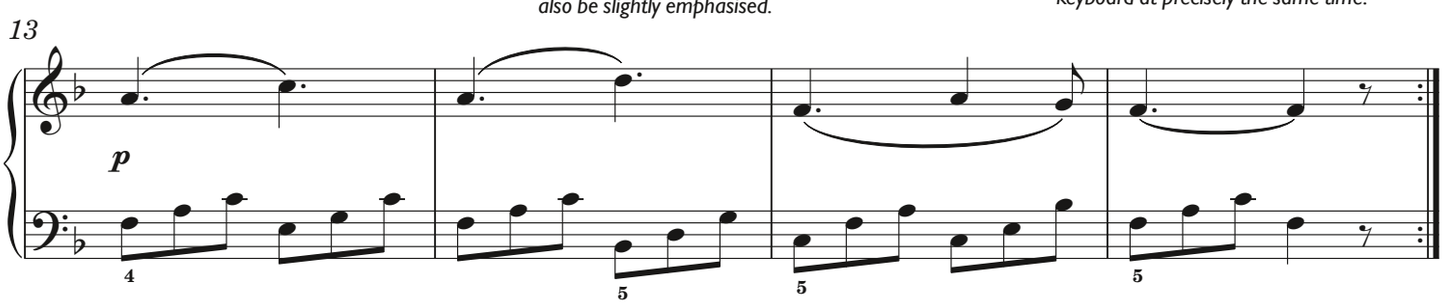
Dynamics are now a little stronger, with the mezzo forte marking below.

Bar 11 is the high point of the piece (the climax), even if a calm mood should prevail.

Play softly at the start of bar 13. This last line should be shaped as one long melody.

The RH dotted crotchet D below should sound poignant. Give it a slight emphasis. The LH bass note B should also be slightly emphasised.

Feel free to make a slight ritardando towards the end, and tail off calmly, making sure to lift both hands from the keyboard at precisely the same time.



TRACK 2

Alexander REINAGLE (1756-1809)

No 11 from 24 *Short and Easy Pieces* Op 1

BEGINNER

Born into a family of Austrian musicians, Reinagle grew up in the Scottish city of Glasgow, where he became a harpsichord teacher and published this collection of simple studies. Later on he worked across Europe and the US, settling in Baltimore.

Playing tips: Try practising slowly at first, hands separately, to ensure clarity and evenness in both hands. Different articulations (staccato, legato and slurs) require careful practice in this short, sprightly16-bar piece. In order to make things flow, it will help to think in four-bar phrases. The first four-bar phrase is repeated, as is the same with the second part of the piece. Try to make the repeats 'different' (bars 5-8, for example, are to be played much softer).

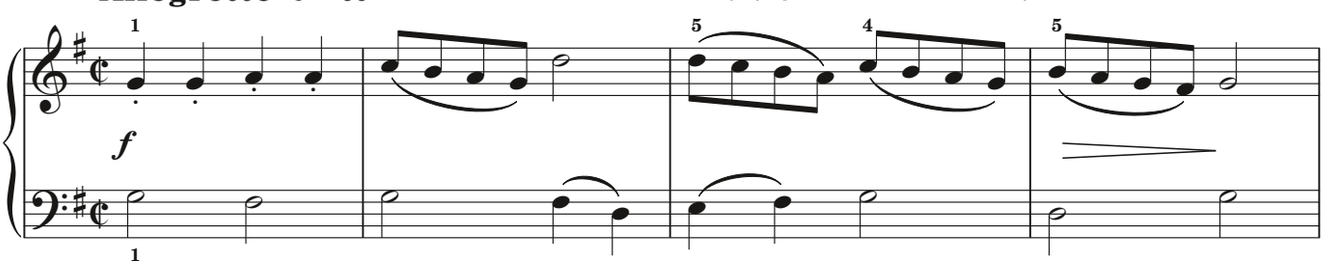
Take a look at the technical tips within the score.

Start out resolutely, with a strong forte dynamic in both hands.

Allegretto ♩ = 69

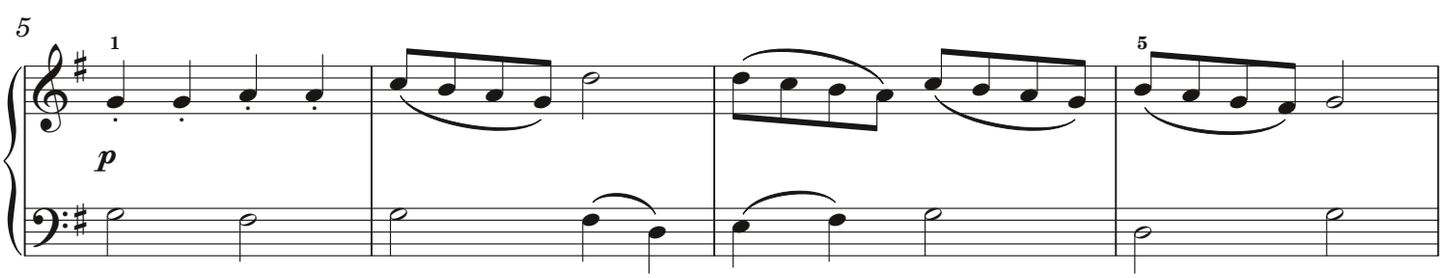
Both hands require good finger articulation.To begin with, lift each finger before playing the next. with an exaggerated movement. When playing faster, less movement is required.

The key is G major.



Learning tips for the RH: The first four notes in bar 1 should be staccato (detached), with subsequent quavers in bar 2 onwards to be legato (joined).
Learning tips for the LH: The LH is the 'foundation' of the piece and should remain steadfast and stricly in time.The notes should be neither staccato nor legato but somewhere in between.

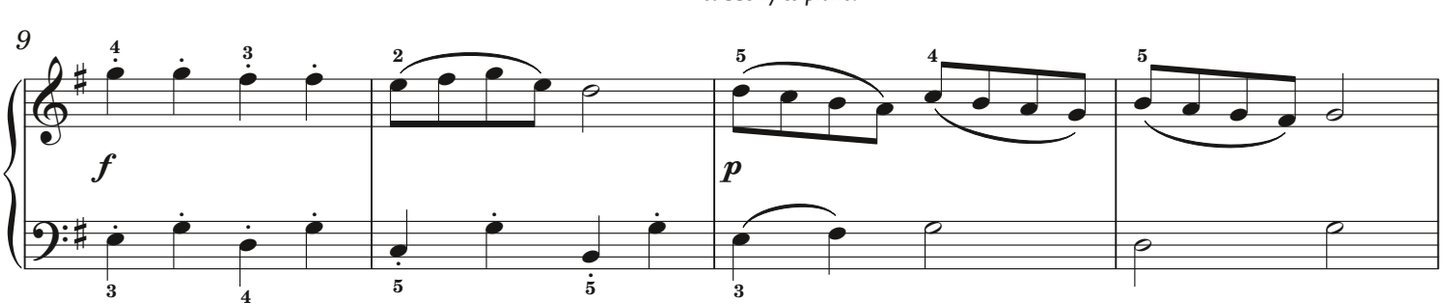
Make a slight decrescendo.



The opening bars are repeated, but notice the sudden dynamic shift to piano (soft).

Back to a forte dynamic at bar 9, where both hands play staccato crotchets, completely in sync.

Reduce the dynamic suddenly to piano.



The second phrase is repeated.

Tail off elegantly towards the end.

TRACK 3

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Minuet and Trio in G K1e & f

BEGINNER/ INTERMEDIATE

The five-year-old Mozart had made his first public appearance as a performer in September 1761 before writing this minuet the same December, doubtless under the tutelage of his father Leopold.

Playing tips: The character is graceful and stately: it's a minuet, so imagine dancers at the court in Mozart's time. The notes look simple enough to learn, but there are plenty of technical and expressive details to take into account. Pay attention to the 'down/up' motion with the slurs (in bar 2 and throughout); lift the relevant hand when there's a rest, and take care to play notes in both hands simultaneously when there are three even crotchets in a bar. Tricky moments to work on out of context include bars 7-8 in the RH, where you should get used to the triplet timing, followed by the trill. You may also need to work on the semiquaver runs in the Trio (they are easy enough to find). Don't rush through them in panic!

TRACK 3

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Minuet and Trio in G K1e & f

BEGINNER/
INTERMEDIATE

Trio

TRACK 4

DON'T MISS MELANIE SPANSWICK'S LESSON ON THIS PIECE PAGE 22

TRAD arr. SCAIFE

Amazing Grace

BEGINNER/ INTERMEDIATE

It may be useful to bear in mind the powerful words of this American Revivalist hymn when approaching this instrumental arrangement. The first of its six verses runs thus: 'Amazing grace! How sweet the sound / That sav'd a wretch like me! / I once was lost, but now am found, / Was blind, but now I see.'

Playing tips: This simple arrangement demands a natural feel for the tempo. The marking above the score states 'Gospel style', which asks the performer to bear in mind how the hymn would be sung in the context of worship (a challenge in itself, when the piano is a percussion instrument!).

Pedal tips: Suggested pedalling by Melanie Spanswick is marked on the score.

Read Melanie Spanswick's step-by-step lesson on this piece on page 22.

TRACK 4

TRAD arr. SCAIFE

Amazing Grace

BEGINNER/
INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 5

Muzio CLEMENTI (1752-1832)

Sonatina in C Op 36 No 1, second movement

INTERMEDIATE

The opening movement of this Sonatina was published with *Pianist* 92. Clementi composed it in 1797 as the first in a series of six 'Progressive Pianoforte Sonatinas' which were designed to gradually stretch the technique of students as they got to grips with the sustaining power of the then-new and still-evolving instrument.

Playing tips: At the start of this elegant Andante in F major, the RH melody should sing out sweetly (notice the 'dolce' marking) above the calm LH triplet accompaniment. Even the trill at the end of bar 3 should come across as effortless, so make sure not to accent or bring attention to it. Even if not marked, the RH repeated notes (at the end of bar 4, as an example) should be staccato, though not too short. A second section starts at bar 9, followed by a short development section at bar 13. The opening material returns at bar 18, but it doesn't last long before a brief coda starts at bars 22-23.

Pedal tips: There are no markings on the score. We suggest barely any pedal at all; just a touch at the end of phrases.

TRACK 5

Muzio CLEMENTI (1752-1832)

Sonatina in C Op 36 No 1, second movement

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 6

ABBA

Thank You For The Music

INTERMEDIATE

This ingenious take on a cabaret song in the style of 1970s pop (the quasi-improvised opening recitative conjures up 1930s Berlin) was originally included on the Swedish super-group's fifth album in 1977, and like all their songs, it was written and produced jointly by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus. Six years later it became a hit single.

Playing tips: When it comes to playing a simplified version of this well-known song, it's not easy to emulate the four singers. Try to capture the feel of the lyrics in terms of tempo and style. Play in a relaxed fashion, always bringing the melody to the fore. This is a good exercise for strengthening the weaker RH fingers (fourth and fifth) as they play a lot of the melody notes.

Pedal tips: Even if not marked, pedalling is required. We suggest a change of pedal every time you see a change in harmony (where you see the chord signs above the RH notes).

Thank You For The Music. Words & Music by Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus © Copyright 1977 Universal/Union Songs Musikforlag AB. Universal Music Publishing Limited. All Rights Reserved. International Copyright Secured.

ABBA

Thank You For The Music

TRACK 7

Edward MACDOWELL (1860-1908)

Beauty in the Rose Garden Op 4 No 3

INTERMEDIATE

Despite its early opus number, this third of four *Forgotten Fairy Tales* was written in 1897 once Macdowell had become the best-known native composer of his day in the US. The previous year he had moved to New York to become the first Professor of Music at Columbia University.

Playing tips: Pay attention to MacDowell's marking: 'Not fast; sweetly and simply'. That's exactly what you need to portray, especially for the first 20 bars, becoming more poignant as the part ascends. Good voicing is required – the LH with its lush sonorous chords (bass notes being the most important) and the RH top notes needing to sing out. The middle section (bars 21-38) is hardest to master, as the chordal writing becomes thicker and the hand stretches wider. We suggest working on this section before learning the opening and the conclusion.

Pedal tips: See markings on the score. Legato pedalling is needed throughout.

TRACK 7

Edward MACDOWELL (1860-1908)

Beauty in the Rose Garden Op 4 No 3

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 7

Edward MACDOWELL (1860-1908)

Beauty in the Rose Garden Op 4 No 3

INTERMEDIATE

Edward MACDOWELL (1860-1908)

Beauty in the Rose Garden Op 4 No 3

TRACK 8

DON'T MISS JANET NEWMAN'S LESSON ON THIS PIECE PAGE 26

Fanny MENDELSSOHN (1805-1847)

Melodie Op 4 No 2

INTERMEDIATE

The Editor of *Pianist* suggested Fanny Mendelssohn's music to our house pianist, Chenyin Li, who asked to record this piece as she felt it was the most poignant and interesting to learn. This Melodie lies at the less challenging end of the composer's extensive writing for the instrument, which includes a stormy *Allegro molto* every bit as virtuosic as her brother's more famous *Allegro brillante*.

Playing tips: When listening to this piece played beautifully by Chenyin on the covermount CD, it all sounds so simple. Look at the score, and it might create panic! Don't let any initial apprehension put you off. First get to grips with the three-part texture of the piece: a top-line RH melody, a middle-part semiquaver accompaniment and regular crotchets in the bass. Once you understand this, the learning process will become a lot clearer, as you will find out when you read Janet Newman's helpful lesson, which addresses each part of the texture separately.

Pedal tips: See the legato pedalling markings on the score.

Read Janet Newman's step-by-step lesson on this piece on page 26.

TRACK 8

Fanny MENDELSSOHN (1805-1847)

Melodie Op 4 No 2

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 8

Fanny MENDELSSOHN (1805-1847)

Melodie Op 4 No 2

INTERMEDIATE

HANS-GÜNTER HEUMANN
BEGINNERS KEYBOARD CLASS

LESSON 21: FINGER FITNESS EXERCISES

On these four pages, *Pianist* covers the most basic stages of learning the piano through a series of lessons by Hans-Günter Heumann. Lesson 21 offers Finger Fitness exercises to help beginner and intermediate pianists to perfect specific technical issues. Work on them slowly at first, feeling every single note, building up the tempo over time. Advanced pianists can use these exercises to warm up.

Finger strength and equalization of all fingers

Exercise No 4 from Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist*

Finger strength and equalization of all fingers

Exercise No 5 from Hanon's *The Virtuoso Pianist*

Make sure that each note is equal in terms of finger weight and sound. The tempo should be even throughout. When practising slowly, lift the fingers between each note, as if you were 'playing' a typewriter. Apply these same learning tips for the previous exercise (on page 45).

Wrist rotation exercise

As the title implies, rotate the wrist slightly between each note. This should produce a nice, relaxed feeling in the hand. Your finger articulation should remain firm and even, however, and you should give a slight emphasis to the first beat of the bar.

Left and right hand melody

A short exercise in which each hand plays the melody in turn. Make sure that the accompaniment doesn't overpower the melody.

Hans-Günter Heumann continues his series for beginners in the next issue.
To find out more about Heumann, go to www.schott-music.com

TRACK 9

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Bagatelle Op 119 No 6

INTERMEDIATE

In the bagatelle form, Beethoven composed some of his most gently whimsical and at the same time puzzling and confrontational music: if these pieces are light-hearted, they are not as trifling as their genre would imply. Indeed the Op 119 set (including a 10-second Allegramente) perplexed one publisher, who turned them down on the basis that such pieces were beneath the composer's dignity. An expensive mistake.

Playing tips: This lesser-known Bagatelle starts out with a long recitative-like passage until it starts 'proper' at bar 7. This introduction needs to sound improvisatory (listen to the recording for guidance on that tricky-looking run). In his article on page 78, Nils Franke offers useful tips on how to learn this work in the manner that Beethoven might have addressed himself to it with a pupil.

Pedal tips: When you listen to the CD, you will hear hardly any pedal. To achieve a crisp and clear texture, avoid using the pedal as much as possible.

Read Nils Franke's article, 'Piano lessons with Beethoven', which appears after the Scores section. It includes his own teaching notes on this piece.

TRACK 9

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Bagatelle Op 119 No 6

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 9

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Bagatelle Op 119 No 6

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 10

Stephen HELLER (1813-1888)

Curious Story from *Album for the Young* Op 138 No 7

INTERMEDIATE

This French pianist and composer of Hungarian birth studied with Carl Czerny in Vienna until (a familiar story to some readers?) his father found the fees prohibitive. In due course he became a distinguished teacher himself, based in Paris, where he counted Hector Berlioz as a friend and Robert Schumann as an admirer of his work. Having written much for students, he produced late pieces tinged with Impressionism.

Playing tips: This is a fun piece to perform. It should sparkle with wit and humour. The tempo marking is Molto vivace (yes, that's really quick!), but start out with slow and methodical practice. Feel the swing of two beats in a bar, where each beat is divided into triplets: a gallop rhythm, bearing in mind the dotted quavers, where both beats in the bar can be accented. Solid finger articulation is needed, especially in the RH: when practising slowly, raise the fingers between each note, but keep the hand close to the keyboard. When it comes to playing at speed, the fingers will fly over the keyboard with much more confidence and less effort.

Pedal tips: Pedalling is not needed: every note should sound with utmost clarity.

TRACK 10

Stephen HELLER (1813-1888)

Curious Story from *Album for the Young* Op 138 No 7

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 10

Stephen HELLER (1813-1888)

Curious Story, No 7 from *Album for the Young* Op 138

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 10

Stephen HELLER (1813-1888)

Curious Story, No 7 from *Album for the Young* Op 138

INTERMEDIATE

TRACK 11

WATCH CHENYIN LI PLAY THIS PIECE AT WWW.PIANISTMAGAZINE.COM

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Serenade for the Doll, No 3 from *Children's Corner*

INTERMEDIATE/ ADVANCED

'Serenade for the Doll' would have been a more natural heading, but Debussy titled *Children's Corner* and its movements in English that was never fluent: perhaps a gesture of gratitude for the work of 'Miss Gibbs', the English governess of his daughter Chou-Chou to whom the suite is dedicated.

Playing tips: This work is very fragmented. We suggested that you listen to it several times with the score at hand, marking up the different sections. Once you have understood the structure of the piece, get learning. The LH fulfils more than a bass-line function and often takes on the melody (at bar 16 onwards, bar 45 and elsewhere). Take careful note of the expressive and dynamic markings – Debussy meticulously wrote them for good reasons.

Pedal tips: Even if not written in the score, you will need ample use of pedal to create the washes of colour. Use your ears.

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Serenade for the Doll, No 3 from *Children's Corner*

TRACK 11

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INTERMEDIATE/ ADVANCED

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Serenade for the Doll, No 3 from *Children's Corner*

TRACK 12

SAINT-SAËNS arr. SILOTI (1863-1945)

The Swan

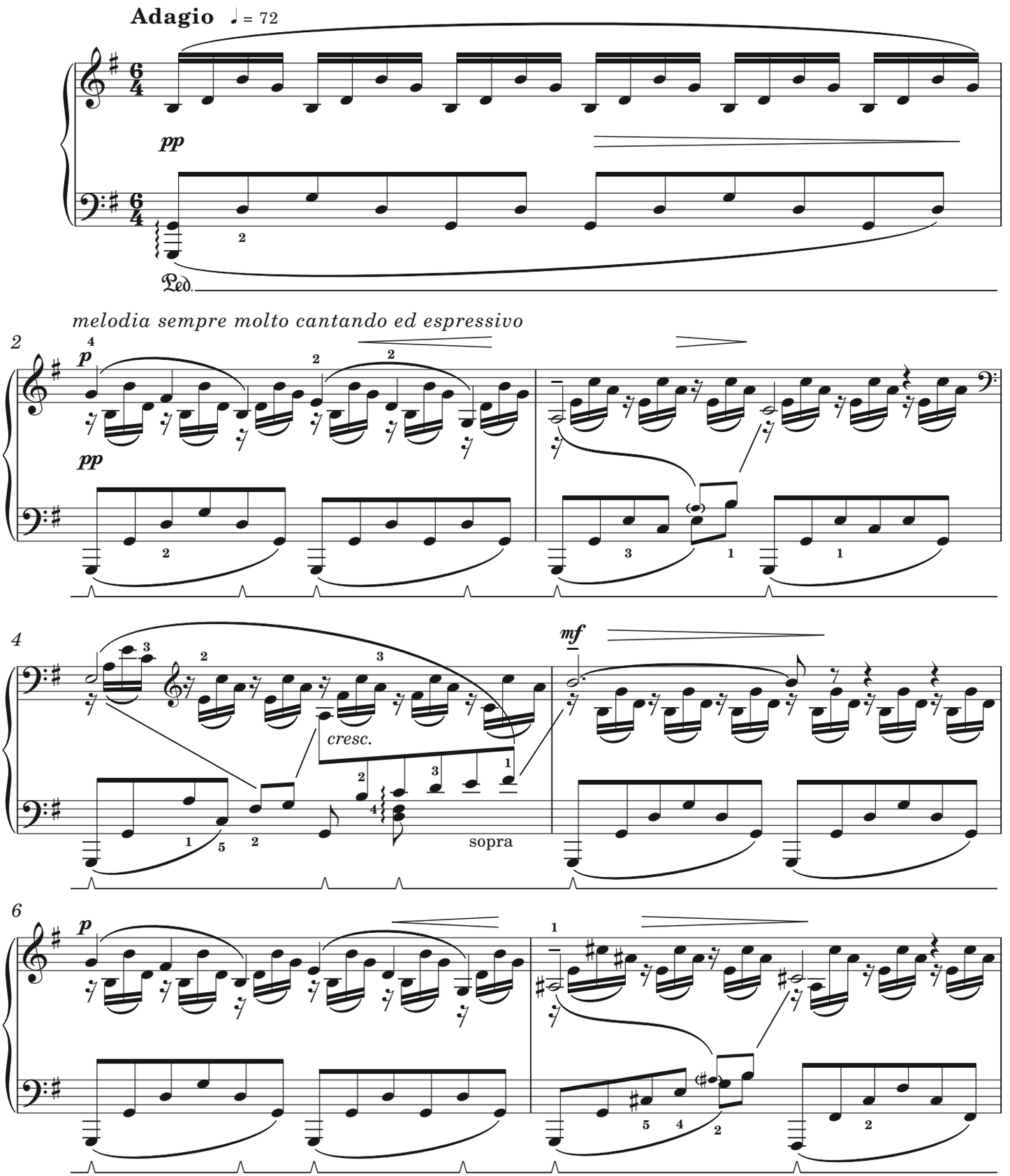
ADVANCED

Pupil of Tchaikovsky, cousin of Rachmaninov, Alexander Siloti was prominent among the 'Silver Age' of Russian musicians at the turn of the last century, as a teacher, arranger and performer; he partnered Rachmaninov in the Second Piano Concerto on separate occasions as both soloist and conductor! His transcriptions of Bach and other composers are surprisingly delicate compared with his contemporaries and reflect his fastidious perfectionism: nothing is left to chance.

Playing tips: When our editor first heard a performance of this Siloti arrangement she was transfixed and immediately determined to include it within the Scores section of *Pianist*. Here, at long last, it is. The melody should feel like it's gliding by, just as a swan would swim across a lake.

Pedal tips: See pedal markings on the score.

Read Lucy Parham's step-by-step lesson on this piece on page 24.



TRACK 12

SAINT-SAËNS arr. SILOTI (1863-1945)

The Swan

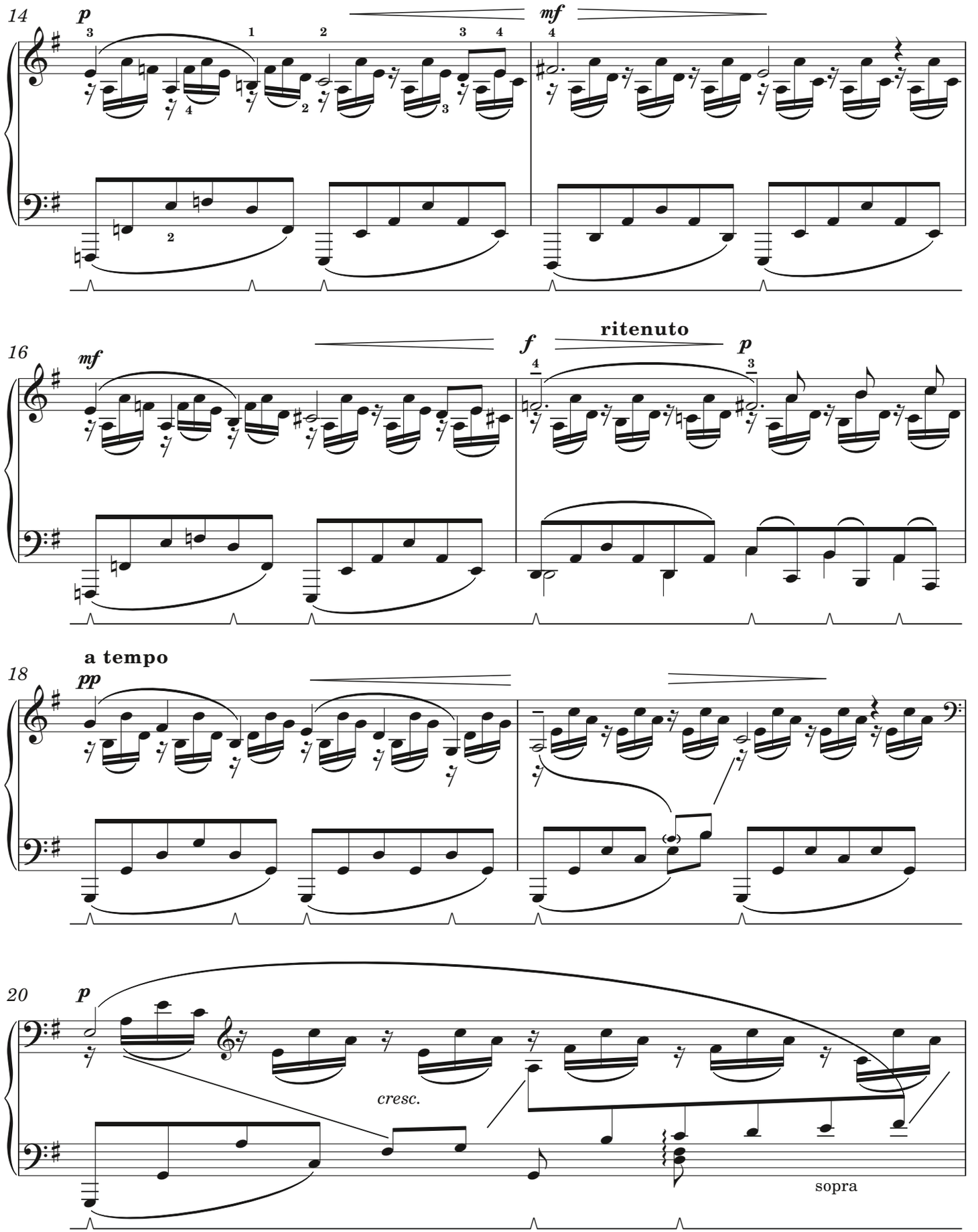
ADVANCED

TRACK 12

SAINT-SAËNS arr. SILOTI (1863-1945)

The Swan

ADVANCED



TRACK 12

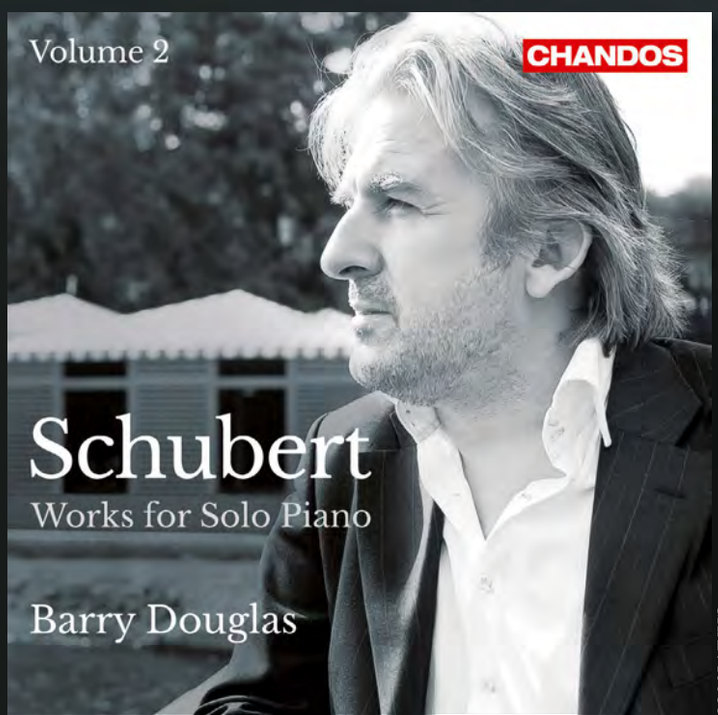
SAINT-SAËNS arr. SILOTI (1863-1945)

The Swan

ADVANCED

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

Barry Douglas
plays Schubert, Works for Solo Piano



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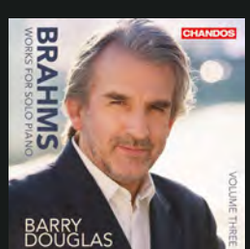

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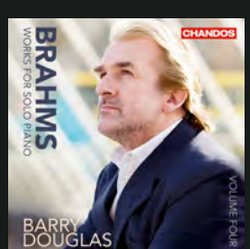

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VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON

The Iceman Cometh

A musical childhood in Reykjavik was the springboard for this pianist, who talks to **Erica Worth** about his career, his debut disc on DG and tales of touring with Philip Glass

Tell me about growing up in Iceland. Where did the piano fit in to your childhood?

I was born in 1984, in the last generation before the internet, so I think I had a childhood of calm and peacefulness. My parents are both musicians and I grew up with my mother teaching piano at home. So I tried my hands at what I'd heard during the lessons she gave. I always saw the piano as the grandest 'toy' of them all. It was either piano or Lego!

In Iceland at that time there were two or three kids of my generation who were quite good – playing things like Prokofiev, Liszt and Chopin – but it was a protected environment, and kind of individualistic. We weren't exposed to a lot of what was going on in the music world. In some ways that's good, in some ways bad. Of course it might have been stimulating to know what was happening in New York, London, Moscow. There was never any obligation when it came to the piano, but most days I really did want to practise – for three, four, five, even six hours a day.

What happened next?

When I was 16, I met the wonderful pianist and teacher Ann Schein when she came to Iceland in 2000. I had just made my concerto debut playing Tchaikovsky's First. She basically told me that I needed to get out of Iceland! She was absolutely right. She suggested I go and study with Jerome Lowenthal at the Juilliard School. Up to that point, I had been to one or two masterclasses outside Iceland, but that was all. So I auditioned and luckily I got in.

Going there marked a decisive change for me. Not only in terms of how much I started to really work (I was known as the kid who never left the practice room!), but more importantly I went to all the concerts I had been dreaming about, which we did not have in Iceland. Seeing Martha Argerich for the first time was a huge moment for me, the way she played the Ravel Concerto. I went to concerts two, three or four nights of the week. The rest of the time I practised incessantly. I realised too that I wasn't alone in the world – there were lots of pianists, some better than me, some worse. It was great to see this, though also a big shock. Seeing all these kids playing the Transcendental Etudes. And in every other practice room someone playing the Brahms Paganini Variations. I mean, every other room!

You studied with two teachers at Juilliard.

I studied with Jerome Lowenthal first. He has a power of spontaneity from the Alfred Cortot tradition, with whom he studied. When he touches the piano he makes a multitude of indescribable colours. Then I studied for my Masters with Robert McDonald, who comes from the Austro-German tradition. Bob studied with Rudolf Serkin. You cannot imagine more contrasting figures than Cortot and Serkin. Bob is quite analytical and 'classical', it's all about proportion and the strength of the form in your interpretation. I love them both very much, as you can probably tell!

How did your career take off?

I graduated from Juilliard in 2008 when I was 24 years old. I decided not to go

All photos @ Ari Magg

down the competition route. I moved with my now wife to Oxford (she was studying there) and I had two or three years studying for myself, to become my own teacher. After Oxford I moved to Iceland for a year, and then Berlin. Gradually I played more and more, but it was an organic progress, by word of mouth. The agent Jasper Parrott heard me in May 2011, playing the Grieg Concerto with Vladimir Ashkenazy at the opening of Reykjavik's Harpa concert hall. Three years later I joined the artist management agency Harrison Parrott, and maybe that's where the seed was sown.

It all seems to have been so effortless.

Not always. In 2012 I felt nothing was happening. I guess during the times I didn't have many concerts I did other things. I did a TV series. I booked a meeting with the head of television (one of the benefits of coming from a small country) and they liked my idea. Iceland was still a shambles after its national bankruptcy. It was fertile ground for something like this: to discuss sonata form, counterpoint, the art of *Winterreise* and so on, all on prime time TV! I could never have done that had I followed a more conventional path with too many concerts.

How did you meet Philip Glass?

In 2014 he invited me to play the complete etudes with him and a third pianist, Maki Namekawa, as part of a tour that included Reykjavik. (Maki made a recording of the 20 complete etudes on Glass's label and she's worked with him for many years.) He came to Iceland the morning before the concert. I had asked his assistant if I should play the etudes for him the day before, in case he wanted changes. He said that wasn't necessary and that he'd love to hear me play them at 4pm on the day of the concert (the concert being at 7.30pm or 8pm).

I turned up punctually at 4pm and I started playing, and we soon realised that I had been sent the wrong version of the etudes! These pieces were still quite new and being prepared for publication. What I had learned was considerably different in terms of the musical structure. So I was a bit shocked. I had learned them by heart too, which is not easy. He left me to it at 5pm, with two and a half hours left to re-learn them. I managed in the end, but I have to say I've definitely looked more comfortable on stage than on that night!

What is it like to play Glass's music for Glass?

Philip approaches the music not only from the composer's perspective, but also from a performer's. He will encourage the performance, if it's convincing, even if he doesn't agree with the details of it. For instance, we haven't always agreed on the tempos, and he's told me 'don't change it'. I tend to play composers who are no longer alive, so it's refreshing to work with Philip, who is one of the pioneering voices of the last century. He's so open to experimentation, and when you hear him play his etudes you feel they are being improvised, as if he's in his workshop.

He's also a man of relentless energy. We were travelling on the same tour early in the morning to Gothenburg in Sweden – a 4am wakeup call, I recall. We had to take two flights, go to the hotel with barely any time to check in or get some rest, and then straight to the venue for the sound-check and rehearsal. We had a light snack and then we went on stage. After the concert, at 10pm, he took the team to a cosy restaurant. We were having a nice time even if we were all exhausted. Just before midnight he started to receive many text messages. He apologised and explained to us that it was his birthday tomorrow and people were already sending him birthday wishes. He ordered champagne at midnight to toast his new year, but also asked for a big cup of black coffee for himself. There he was, turning 77, and I asked him, 'What are you doing?' He replied, 'You see, Víkingur, I always compose for about five hours… and seeing I haven't had any time today, I have to do it now.' He asked Maki to knock on his door at 6am. Amazing. He turns 80 on 31 January, and if you think about it, he's turning 100 because of the time he *hasn't* slept!

Can an amateur pianist play the etudes?

They are not like the Transcendental Etudes of Liszt. They are approachable, and they work well as educational music, but I actually find them quite difficult. If you play them as clockwork-like, pristine structures and you look for the most specific colours, timing and rhythm, then they become as difficult as any etude. The beauty of these pieces is in the detail.

The etudes differ in terms of level: the first book has some easier and slow etudes. It also depends on the tempo you choose. I don't think everyone has to play the fast ones quite as fast as I do! I encourage readers to try them. There's a lovely new edition from Chester Music.

What's your relationship with minimalist music?

I never know what minimalism is. If you want to define it as the music of a few late 20th-century American composers – such as Terry Riley, Steve Reich and Philip Glass – I like it very much. I would never describe it as minimal music. If you think of it as minimal, you miss out on so many aspects! If you are looking for Mahler in Glass or Reich, yes, it's minimal Mahler – but it's maximal Glass and maximal Reich! It's a common misunderstanding.

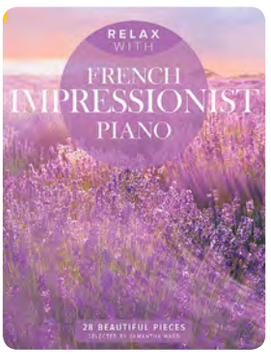
It's perhaps too easy to put them into a group – Reich, Glass, John Adams, for example – but I find these three to be extraordinarily different musicians and minds. You can also say that Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn were all Classicists, but that doesn't make them the same.

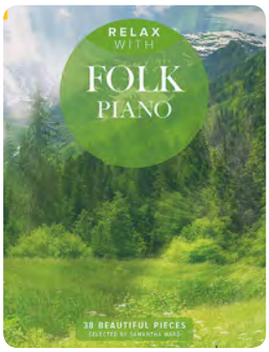
When you open the score of Glass's Etudes, you see these pure structures and repetitions, but when working on them I realised that there's no such thing as a repetition in this music. It's more like rebirth. As long as time keeps moving forward, we are ever changing. When we come back to the same material, we are not the same; the material's not the same; it will never be the same! ■

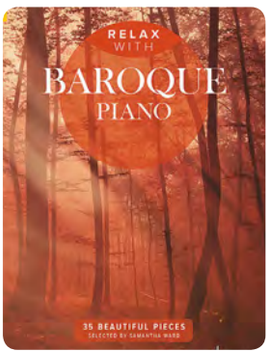
Glass: Piano Works
Víkingur Ólafsson (with the Siggi String Quartet) DG 479 6918

Víkingur Ólafsson is Artistic Director of Sweden's Vinterfest in February (www.vinterfest.se) and the Reykjavik Midsummer Music festival, in early June (reykjavikmidsummermusic.com). Ólafsson makes his debut at the International Piano Series in London in autumn 2017. vikingurolafsson.com

RELAX WITH YOUR PIANO







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UNDERSTANDING THEORY

PART 7: MODULATION

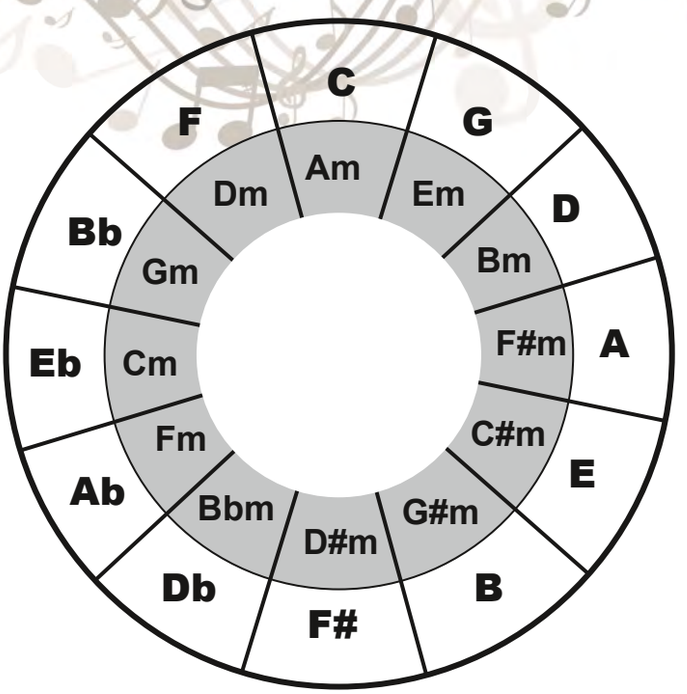
Music educator **Nigel Scaife** explains how changing keys gives form, colour and tension to music – and why it's crucial to understand the circle of fifths

Nigel Scaife began his musical life as a chorister at Exeter Cathedral. He graduated from the Royal College of Music, where he studied the piano with Yonty Solomon, receiving a Master's degree in Performance Studies. He was awarded a doctorate from Oxford University and has subsequently had wide experience as a teacher, performer, examiner and presenter. Nigel has contributed to many publications as a writer on music and music education.

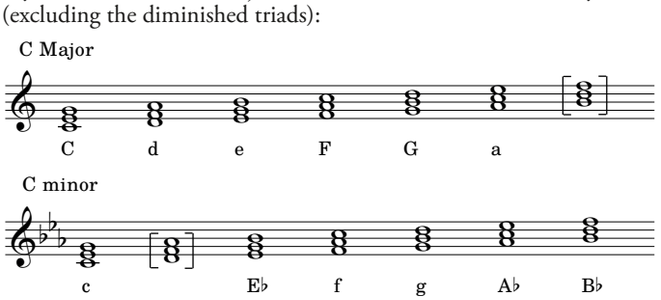
In this issue we're going to look at some of the ways composers typically move from one key to another – the process called **modulation**. Most piano pieces start and end in the same 'home' key, but they usually modulate at some point, even if only for a short time. The process of modulation should not be a mysterious one that only composers grapple with, as understanding how the modulations work in the pieces you are learning gives you a better understanding of the music's structure. This in turn helps you make the music more expressive in performance. The process of passing from one key to another adds interest, variety and contrast to music, as well as drama in many cases, so to convey these aspects fully the performer needs to grasp the tonal journey of the piece.

Modulation is a vital aspect of form in music. The process of changing key articulates structures such as binary, ternary and the more sophisticated sonata form, to name but a few. In order to fully establish a different key to the home key there has to be a perfect cadence in the new key, usually with a dominant seventh before the new tonic chord. In **binary form** the first section starts in the tonic and moves to the dominant, with the second section starting in the dominant and working its way back to the tonic by the end. This AB form appears in many simple piano pieces, particularly Baroque dance movements. Studying the harmony of these pieces is a good way to start getting to grips with modulation.

The most common type of modulation is from the home key to what is known as one of the **closely related keys**. These are keys with a difference of no more than one sharp or flat in their key signature. All keys have five closely related keys and these can be found by looking at the **circle of fifths** diagram opposite. Taking any given key you will see that there are five keys surrounding it. So, for example, taking B♭ major you can see that it is surrounded by G minor (its relative minor), F major (dominant), D minor (relative of the dominant), E♭ major (subdominant) and C minor (relative of the subdominant):



The most common modulation in major keys is undoubtedly to the dominant. In minor keys it is common to modulate to the relative major or dominant minor. It is worth noting that the five closely related keys form the diatonic major and minor triads of the home key (excluding the diminished triads):



Any keys which are not closely related to each other are said to be 'remote' or 'distantly related' and modulation to these keys is relatively less common as a consequence.

So how do we know when the music has modulated? As well as hearing the movement to the new key, we can usually find visual signs in the notation. For a new key to be fully established there must be a perfect cadence in the new key. This means that there is likely to be an increased use of accidentals (sharps and flats) within the music. These accidentals often give us a clue that there is a change in tonality. If, for example, we take C major as our home key, we can see that the dominant 7ths of the closely related keys all involve the use of an accidental:

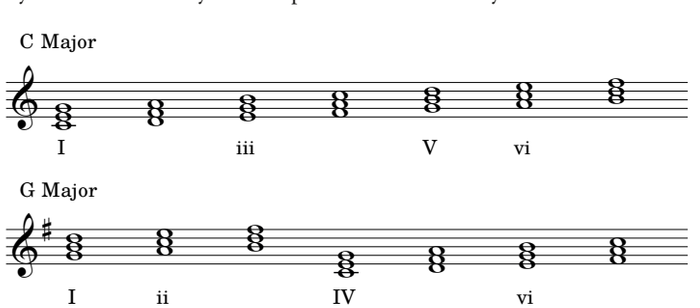
From C major

Modulation to:	New key	Dominant 7th
Dominant	**G**	**D7 (D, F#, A, C)**
Subdominant	**F**	**C7 (C, E, G, Bb)**
Relative minor	**a**	**E7 (E, G#, B, D)**
Relative minor of dominant	**e**	**B7 (B, D#, F#, A)**
Relative minor of subdominant	**d**	**A7 (A, C#, E, G)**

There are three standard means of getting from one key to another. Firstly, there is what is called **common chord modulation**. This is where the process is made smooth by the use of one of more chords that are common to both the old key and the new key. Chords which are common to both keys and which are used to modulate are called **pivot chords**. These pivot chords straddle both keys and make the process seamless.

In the following example from Mozart's Fantasie in D minor K397, the chord in bar 4 acts as a pivot, as it is both the tonic in the home key of this particular section, D major, and the subdominant of the key to which the music is about to modulate, A major. The chord in bar 5 is an E^7 in first inversion. The introduction of the G♯ as an accidental in bar 5 alerts us to the fact that the music is moving away from the tonic key. It only fully arrives in the new key with the perfect cadence at the end of the example:

So pivot chords can be named in both old and new keys. Any given pair of related keys shares at least one diatonic chord in common which can provide the smooth transition. If we take the modulation from C major to its dominant, G major, we see that they share four common chords, any one of which may act as a pivot between the keys:



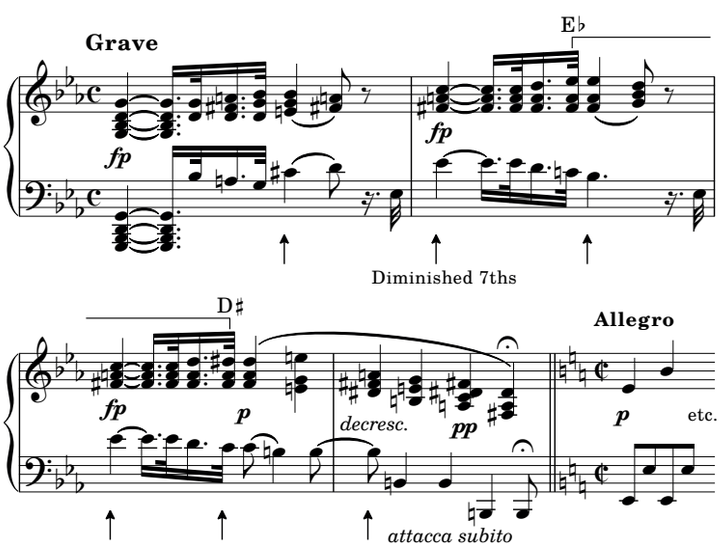
Passing from one key to another adds interest, variety and contrast, so the performer needs to grasp the tonal journey of the piece

The most common pivot chords in a major key are ii or vi; in minor keys they are i or iv.

The second type of modulation is called **abrupt modulation**. As its name suggests, this is where there is a direct change of key without the use of an obvious pivot chord. In this type of modulation it is more likely that the key to which the music moves is not a closely related one. Abrupt modulation is far less common than the common-chord type of modulation.

The third type of modulation is through the use of **chromatic chords**. These are chords which contains a note or notes which do not belong to the prevailing key. Chromatic chords are used for their colour and for their dynamic quality which can help to propel the music forward. They are often written simply as interesting chords in their own right within a key, but they can also be used to modulate.

One of the most colourful of the many chromatic chords is the diminished 7th. This chord is made up of a series of minor thirds and has an unstable quality which gives it a distinctive sound. Here are some examples in Beethoven's 'Pathétique' Sonata. Notice how the diminished 7th chords, shown by arrows, destablise the sense of key. They allow Beethoven to move from G minor to the following remote key of E minor at the start of the next Allegro section. The E♭ spelling in the second bar of the example changes enharmonically to D♯ in the following bar, where the function of the diminished 7th changes and the key moves from the flat side of the circle of fifths to the sharp side:

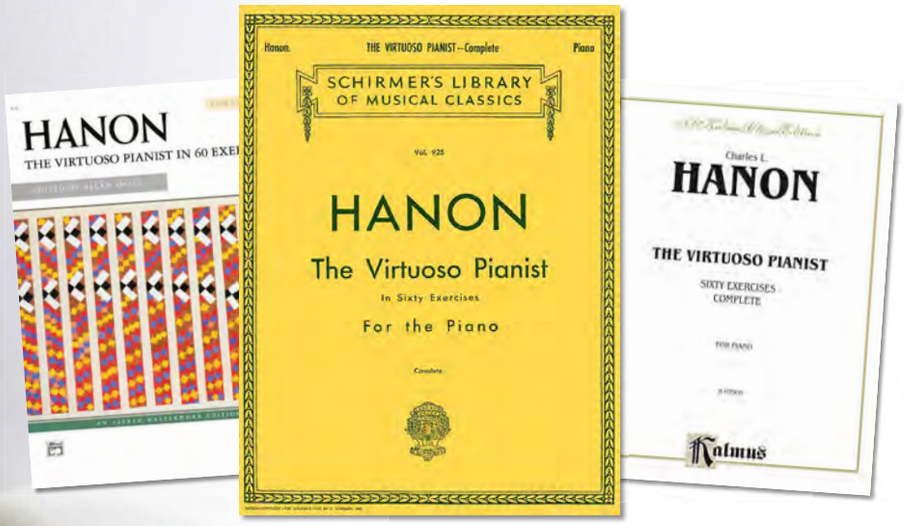


If one note in a diminished 7th chord is taken down a semitone, then a dominant 7th chord is created. In this way a number of different keys can be reached with relative ease: a useful tool in the improviser's toolbox!

When a chromatic chord effectively acts like a dominant it is called a **secondary dominant** (or sometimes an 'applied dominant'). The chord that follows one of these will sound like a temporary tonic and therefore it is said to be 'tonicized'. In other words it is momentarily established as a tonic without that tonic being fully established as a new key.

This brings us to the issue of what constitutes a modulation. Although the concept is relatively straightforward to grasp in principle, in reality it can be less clear-cut. Sometimes there might be only a brief change of key, in which case it is usually called a 'transient' or 'passing' modulation. This variety within the world of modulation only reinforces the fact that music is such an endlessly fascinating art form to study, to analyse and to theorise about – and even better, to participate in. ■

In the next issue Nigel Scaife addresses the complex subject of ornaments, explaining the correct way to execute them.



HANON RECONSIDERED

The mention of exercises makes most pianists groan but they're essential for building technique. **John Evans** talks to leading pianists and discovers how they keep exercising fresh

Picture the scene. Charles-Louis Hanon, pedagogue, composer and creator of that great finger-workout manual, *The Virtuoso Pianist in Sixty Exercises*, is enjoying his daily stroll along the seafront at Boulogne-sur-Mer in northern France when he meets two American ladies who, it turns out, are also piano teachers. One is called Abby Whiteside and the other, Dorothy Taubman. After a brief exchange of pleasantries, the three adjourn to a café to discuss their work. Big mistake.

The views of these two Americans couldn't be more different from the respected and respectable Frenchman who sits before them. Since its publication in 1872, Hanon's *60 Exercises*, has become a mainstay of teachers and pianists the world over. None other than the great pianist and composer Sergei Rachmaninov, who practises them every day, says they are why Russia's conservatoires produce so many virtuosos. But as Hanon leans back in his chair with quiet satisfaction, he senses his two new friends are not so impressed.

Whiteside politely suggests Hanon's exercises are the problem and not the solution for anyone aspiring to be a sensitive and successful pianist. She rises from her chair and, ignoring the nervous glances being directed at her from others in the café, demonstrates her theories.

Turning an imaginary doorknob, she shows how the forearm and wrist rotate as one.

© Lang Lang: © Harald Hoffmann/Sony; Graham Fitch: © Erica Worth; Cheryin Li: © Hao LV/Lumira Studio

Whiteside cracks an imaginary whip to demonstrate how the upper arm controls the action of the forearm and wrist. And then – *sacré bleu!* – she half rises from her chair to adopt the position of a sprinter at the start line, to show how a pianist can balance themselves against the floor and the piano stool, enabling their whole body to be part of the playing process.

At last, Whiteside sits down and explains to Hanon that a pianist's power lies not in the fingers but in the whole body. By coordinating the large muscles of the legs, the back and the upper arms, a pianist can play with more freedom and greater control.

'Nothing less than the entire body can furnish the control for a real rhythm, for the most delicate gradations in the use of dynamics and for the most powerful climaxes. Put this emotional rhythm in your body and keep it going.'

Hanon, now determined to face down this brash American, flexes his fingers in readiness for his Exercise No 1, keen to demonstrate how dexterous fingers are the natural servants of the music. Alas, before he can strike the first of his imaginary notes, he is interrupted by the other lady, emboldened by her friend's theatrics.

'Your finger exercises are the cause of untold misery,' says Dorothy Taubman. She explains how generations of pianists have suffered injury through awkward and repetitive exercises intended to strengthen the fingers. Now, thanks to her theories and practices – notably her ideas on coordinate motion – she says injured pianists have been able to restore their technique.

Coordinate motion, she explains, is the practice of harnessing all the parts of the body to use as one. Crucially, no single body part is required to perform all tasks. Awkward movements may be eliminated by using those parts of the body best able to perform them. Body parts are properly aligned in order to aid movement and support. Gravity may be harnessed to reduce muscular effort; using the whole body amplifies the individual effectiveness of the body parts, so minimising the amount of action and energy required in playing.

To Hanon the ideas espoused by Whiteside and Taubman are anathema. He may be aware that the pedagogue Theodor Leschetizky believes that 'finger movements are right if they combine with the natural swing of the relaxed arm.' He has heard another great piano teacher, Leonid Nikolayev, pronounce that there can be 'nothing by finger without arm; nothing by arm without finger.' But the ideas he has heard this morning beyond the pale. He bids them good day.

Brickbats and bouquets

Of course, this encounter never took place. Had she bothered to make the sea crossing from the US to France towards the end of the 19th century, Abby Whiteside, who was born in 1881 and who died just over 50 years ago in 1956, might conceivably have visited Hanon, who died in 1900.

Not so, Taubman. She was born a century ago this year, in 1917, and died in 2013 aged 95. Even so, it's not hard to imagine that in some celestial debating chamber, the three might still come to intellectual blows.

Today, here on Earth, their legacy and that of others famous for their exercises including Carl Czerny, Oscar Beringer, Isidor Phillip, Carl Tausig, Josef Pischna and no less a figure than Johannes Brahms, continues to be debated. Indeed, the temperature of such debates has risen in recent years with the emergence of online groups promoting and defending one school of thought over another. The followers of Whiteside and Taubman, especially, are evangelical in their enthusiasm.

Hanon, on the other hand, seems to attract a less enthusiastic following, probably because his approach now seems so narrow. True, there's a website dedicated to the man and his exercises where you can buy the three editions of his most famous 'manual', but people seem free to throw brickbats and bouquets at him with alacrity.

Graham Fitch is a renowned UK-based piano teacher, familiar to readers of *Pianist*, who is prepared to see both good and bad in Hanon's legacy. However, regardless of whose exercises are being discussed he's clear about one thing: *how* we do an exercise matters more than *what* we do.

'There are certain activities that pianists do that simply kills a lot of time,' he says. 'If you're not sure what you're doing, mindless exercises polish your halo but nothing more.' Unfortunately, Hanon's exercises lend themselves to this approach. 'For any technical gains to be made, we need the full involvement of the ear and the mind. We need a specific aim when practising.'

Fitch's solution is to adapt, or 'jailbreak', Hanon's exercises by altering them to challenge the mind as well as the fingers.

THREE OF A KIND

Charles-Louis Hanon

The Virtuoso Pianist (complete; G Schirmer) is published singly in three volumes or complete. In the preface, Hanon confidently proclaims: 'If all five fingers of the hand were absolutely equally well trained, they would be ready to execute anything written for the instrument.' **hanon-online.com**

Abby Whiteside

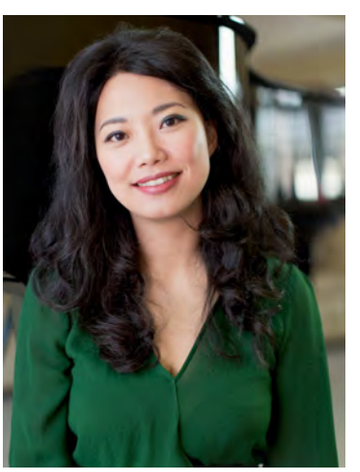
The influential teacher's legacy is kept alive by the Abby Whiteside Foundation, which trains a new generation of teachers and performers in her work. The Foundation presents a concert series at Carnegie Hall, featuring world-renowned artists and promising young pianists in the early stages of their careers. **abbywhiteside.org**

Dorothy Taubman

The so-called Taubman Approach trains musicians in the piano teacher's theories on alignment and coordinate motion at the Golandsky Institute, led by former Taubman protégé Edna Golandsky. Proponents of the Approach claim it has helped pianists overcome their technical limitations, as well as treat playing-related injuries. **golandskyinstitute.org**

An exercise regimen was essential for Lang Lang as for every Chinese student

How we do an exercise matters more than what we do, says Graham Fitch



Hanon OK, Czerny better, Brahms best, according to Chenyin Li

He transposes them, alters their rhythms, plays one hand evenly and the other in a dotted rhythm, and plays them as a wrist exercise so the fingers are not operating as single digits but as extensions of the hand. His ideas are limited only by his imagination.

Crucially, Fitch also involves the forearm since, having briefly studied with Taubman, he is convinced forearm rotation is at the root of piano technique. 'It is possible to reach a very high level of skill using fingers,' he says, 'but virtuosity cannot be achieved without a blended activity involving the arm.'

Still, for all his scepticism, Fitch clearly plays – or at least jailbreaks – Hanon's exercises. So also did a young Lang Lang who, in his autobiography *Journey of a Thousand Miles* briefly mentions impressing his first piano teacher by playing 'an extremely difficult exercise by Hanon'.

'Professor Zhu told me that I played with neither hesitancy nor fear,' Lang Lang proudly recalls. Later in the book he remembers 'tackling impossible-to-play pieces by Czerny.'

Get out of jail

Chenyin Li, who records the covermount CDs for *Pianist*, is not surprised that Lang Lang practised Hanon exercises. 'Hanon is like a bible for every Chinese kid learning the piano,' she says. 'At a rudimentary level he is OK. However, Czerny's studies give you a better finger-based technique, with a lot of agility and flexibility in the upper finger joints. He's perfect for Scarlatti and Haydn.'

Li is no serious fan of exercises, though, certainly for more developed students. 'I prefer to encourage them to memorise and develop their technique based on the challenges in the repertoire they encounter. It's a lot more creative and stretches the mind as it seeks to find solutions.'

In this respect, Li says Brahms presents lots of technical difficulties in terms of bringing out inner lines, while with Liszt her approach is to go so far, leave it a while and return, when, she claims, 'you'll find everything falls into place – give him time!' Perhaps surprisingly, she says Rachmaninov is 'hand-friendly' but Chopin's music is awkward: 'The melodic line is so exposed!'

Professor Vanessa Latarche, the head of keyboard studies at the Royal College of Music in London, is clear about the perils of repetitive exercises – Hanon's or anyone else's. 'One should always concentrate musically on anything one plays, be it exercises or repertoire,' she says. 'Robotic work doesn't enhance anything; it just makes the playing yet more digital and ugly.' So in a similar way to Fitch and his 'jailbreak' approach to Hanon, Latarche advocates playing scales and exercises with legato and staccato touches, and at speeds which students can build to for a particular practice session.

Vanessa Latarche: 'Robotic work doesn't enhance anything'

Benjamin Grosvenor: 'Keep it interesting, break things into groups'

Stephen Hough: 'All that matters is a good hand position and to be relaxed'

'There is also something to be said for playing slowly and firmly. Speed is not the only aim,' remarks Latarche. 'Depth of tone, evenness and finger strength are also important.'

Benjamin Grosvenor, who was recently named the inaugural winner of the Ronnie and Lawrence Ackman Classical Prize, awarded by the New York Philharmonic, is another pianist with memories of 'jailbreaking' Hanon, which is an approach he wholeheartedly recommends.

'When I was younger, I would do exercises at the beginning of my practice sessions: scales, arpeggios and Hanon,' he says. 'I tried to keep it interesting, breaking things into groups and playing around with different rhythms, and playing wrist and finger staccato, as well as legato, and adding dynamic shaping. I'd also play Hanon in different keys and at different tempi.

'I would recommend this kind of variety to anyone who is undertaking such exercises,' adds Grosvenor. 'They can be of the "automatic" variety of course, but there are many studies which develop the same kind of skills, while also having musical substance – by Chopin and Czerny, for example. I don't doubt that the work I did playing Hanon and others when I was younger helped to build my technique, increasing finger agility and developing skills, and it may be that at a certain point in the future I pick up some exercises again to work on any particular aspect I find is lacking.'

So, a warm endorsement from Grosvenor for Hanon and his ilk – and also from Stephen Hough, at least for the daily ritual of practising exercises. 'Playing the piano is physical, and as a dancer or a sprinter needs to stretch and limber up, so does an instrumentalist,' he says. 'As we get older, I think it's probably more important than ever, and the ten minutes spent on this ends up saving time.'

Hough reveals he played a lot of exercises as a youngster, including those by Beringer (such as the *Daily Technical Studies for Piano*), Rafael Joseffy (*School of Advanced Piano Playing*) and Pischna (*Technical* and *Progressive Studies*) as well as Hanon, whose exercises he played in all keys. But then, perhaps when he felt his finger technique was sufficiently well developed, he stopped. Now he's back to practising the exercises of the Spanish pianist and pedagogue Alberto Jonás. 'I only do 10-15 minutes a day but I find it tremendously helpful,' remarks Hough. 'I play them backstage, too. I've adapted some of the Jonás examples and make up my own. I have about half a dozen. Rachmaninov apparently did scales and exercises for an hour a day and no one played better!'

On the question of approach and mental attitude, Hough is quite clear: 'Musicality doesn't come into it. All that matters is a good hand position and to be totally relaxed with no muscular strain. Know what you're trying to achieve and what you want to get out of the session. Rattling through any old exercise is a waste of time.' On that point, Hanon, Whiteside and Taubman could probably agree. ■

Benjamin Grosvenor: © Sophie Wright/Decca; Stephen Hough: © Andrew Crowley

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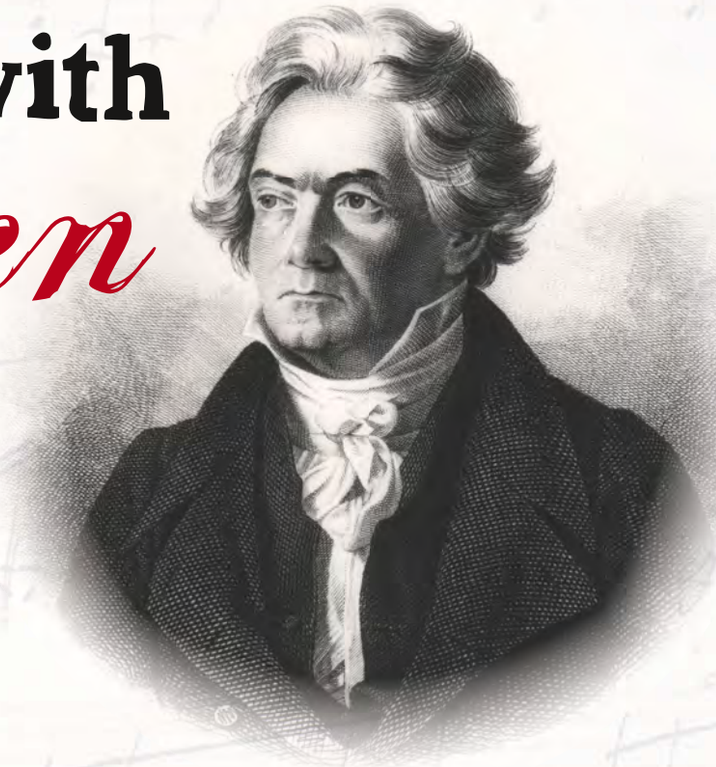
Piano lessons with Beethoven

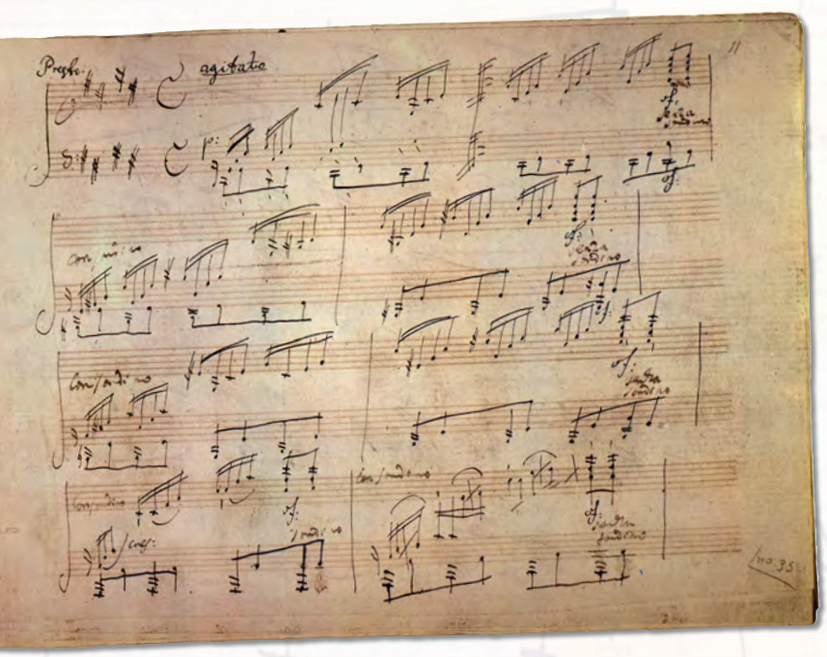


What can it have been like, sitting at the bench with one of the greatest but most irascible composers by your side? Using the testimony of his pupils, Nils Franke finds out

Posthumous veneration rapidly bestowed on Beethoven the status of a hero. In the eyes of his successors he became a towering figure, once the quality and impact of his music had been absorbed by composers, performers and then listeners. Over time, Beethoven the man receded from view. When we add to that the contemporaneous accounts of a fiercely independent spirit, and the temperament to go with it, then finding out how Beethoven really taught the piano begins to look like a (potentially) tricky subject. But that's not necessarily so.

Consider this. When Beethoven first made his mark in Vienna, he did so primarily as a pianist: more specifically, as an improviser. His audiences, students, even colleagues and sometimes rivals had to acknowledge that here was someone quite remarkable at work. Beethoven's notorious second encounter with the piano virtuoso Daniel Steibelt (1765-1823) at a shared concert certainly confirms that unique combination of temperament and ability. Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838) tells the story:

'Now [Beethoven] went to the piano to improvise. He did so in his usual manner; not orderly and seemingly being pushed towards it. On his way he picked up the cello part of Steibelt's quintet, placed it (deliberately?) upside-down on the piano and, using one finger, hammered out the first few bars. Offended and annoyed [by previous events] he improvised in such a way that Steibelt left the room before Beethoven had finished; in fact, thereafter Steibelt made it a condition that Beethoven was not to be invited if someone requested the pleasure of his company.'



For a performer to take part in and perform at such social gatherings required an invitation. There are many colourful accounts of events and soirées where artists and local dignitaries would mingle according to a particular social etiquette. Musicians gained access to a melting pot of a select society: aristocratic and wealthy sponsors, pupils, supporters and distinguished strangers passing through a community. Whether they were touring musicians or local and familiar figures, they tended to have a tripartite musical profile as performer-composer-teacher, which was much in demand at such events. Beethoven was no exception.

As a composer and performer Beethoven needs no introduction, but what do we actually know about his piano lessons? There are a number of sources, but for the purpose of this article I have decided to focus predominantly on the recollections of his students Carl Czerny and Ferdinand Ries.

The lessons

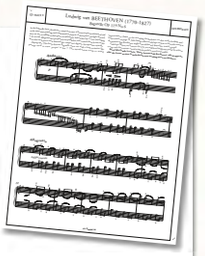
Aged 10, Carl Czerny (1791-1857) was taken by his father to play to Beethoven. Czerny describes how he performed Mozart's Piano Concerto in C major (he is not specific about which one) and Beethoven's recently published 'Pathétique' Sonata Op 13, and was then accepted as a student. Beethoven instructed Czerny's father to obtain CPE Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* and issued instructions that the boy should bring it to his next lesson. Czerny takes up the story:

'In my first lessons Beethoven dealt exclusively with scales in all keys and showed me the then (to many players) almost unknown proper positioning of the hands, the fingers and especially the thumbs; rules whose use I only fully comprehended much later. Thereafter he went through the practice pieces of this teaching book [CPE Bach's] and drew particular attention to the use of legato, which he himself applied in an unsurpassed manner, and which all other pianists at the time still believed to be impossible to execute, as the sharply cut-off playing style, dating from Mozart's time, was still fashionable.'

Ferdinand Ries is also detailed in his description of what really mattered to Beethoven in his teaching. Wrong notes attracted little criticism, but Beethoven was most particular about musical expression. To my mind, there are two possible reasons. Wrong notes are obvious mistakes, so there is little point in spending time discussing what an advanced student such as Ries would notice anyway. Musical expression, however, is a more subjective issue. With Beethoven in the dual role of both composer and teacher, the composer in him prioritised the creative and artistic over the mechanical. Ries recalled:

'If I missed something in a passage, such as notes or leaps which he wanted to hear emphasised, he rarely commented. But when the expression

Beethoven's way



Nils Franke offers teaching tips for the Bagatelle on page 49 of this issue

When Friedrich Starcke published his piano method in Vienna in 1819, Beethoven, who had for some time entertained the idea of writing a piano method himself, allowed his Bagatelles Op 119 to be published as the second part of the method. Here are some suggestions as to how Beethoven's priorities in his lessons can be put to good use as you learn this piece.

Shaping an improvised passage (bar 4). There is always the temptation to think of notes in small print as having to be played quickly. That's not necessarily the case, nor do they need to have the same length. Beethoven is embellishing a D major chord, using a semitone below each chord inversion to add interest. Play with the music and find out which notes you'd like to emphasise. This passage works if you get gradually faster or slower, but you need to find a way to make the agogical adjustment work. Remember Beethoven making Ries play a cadenza 17 times? Happy practising!

Balance between hands (into bars 7 and 11 respectively). The melodic line appears first in the RH, then in the LH, which makes it such a useful piece to learn. If you find it difficult to achieve a good dynamic contrast between both hands, replace dynamics in your practice with touch and work on this as a legato/staccato exercise. Once you've done this a few times, go back to using dynamic contrast and it should sound much improved.

Dynamics and timing (bars 27-30). As per Ries' comment reproduced on page 84, the combination of crescendo and ritardando was something special in Beethoven's playing. Here are three bars in which you can work on this Beethovenian combination of dynamics and timing.

Repetitive practice (bars 40-43). This is another passage that hints at Beethoven's skills as an improviser. It makes a dramatic interjection within the piece, probably for no other reason but to make the player sound good – and there's nothing wrong with that. The RH has some awkward and unpredictable patterns. Keep the wrist loose, maybe even changing the angle of the hand in relation to the keyboard by raising the elbow ever so slightly, to support whatever fingering you choose. Only repetitive and slow practice will give you sufficient control to perform this section evenly and quickly.

Manuscript image, page 82: Autograph of Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata, last movement

(crescendo and other such markings) or the character of the piece left something to be desired, he became cross because he claimed that the former happened accidentally, whereas the latter showed lack of knowledge, feeling or attention. The former happened rather frequently to him [Beethoven], even when playing in public.'

Beethoven was very particular and even insistent about expressive musical detail. Ries continues:

'Sometimes he required me to repeat something ten times, occasionally even more often. In the F major variations… [Op 34] I had to repeat almost the complete final Adagio variations some 17 times. He was not yet completely satisfied with the expression of the small cadenza, though I believed I was playing it as well as he did himself. On that day I had almost a two-hour lesson.'

And yet Beethoven was not adverse to changing the notes themselves, even when in print. Ries remembers two occasions 'when Beethoven gave me notes to add to his compositions; in the Rondo of his "Pathétique" Sonata (opus 13), and the theme of the Rondo in his First Concerto in C major, for which he set me several double notes to make it sound more brilliant.'

The Cramer connection

Strange though it sounds, when Beethoven began to teach, probably in the 1780s, the idea of a piano tutor book, as we know it today, was in its infancy. Yes, there were some method books, but students learned skills by playing material that was compositionally important too: scales, arpeggios, and more scales and arpeggios. There were also chord sequences, but these grew out of the practice of traditional keyboard harmony.

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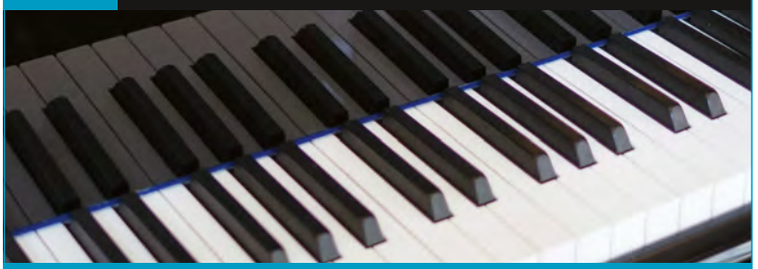

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The teaching resources of the late 18th century were as much concerned with elementary harmony as with entry-level pianism. A dozen or so beginners' pieces were quickly followed by real repertoire, but easier real repertoire, as the content of CPE Bach's essay reveals (see Czerny's comment earlier).

As piano playing became an increasingly widespread activity, so tailor-made educational music was published more widely, and to cater for students at various levels of technical ability and musicianship. The first set of studies by Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858) was written for the equivalent of Grade 6 standard and above. Published in 1804, it became a marker in the history of compositions which were written to test and improve specific aspects of technique, but were also good music in their own right (as opposed to the other way round).

Beethoven was impressed. According to Ries, Beethoven called Cramer 'a remarkable pianist' and began to use the latter's studies in his own teaching. Luckily Beethoven's friend Anton Schindler (1795-1864) scribbled down the composer's comments, thereby documenting his approaches to technical issues such as finger dexterity, voicing, and evenness of playing, all of which complement the recollections of Czerny and Ries, even if some of Schindler's other testimonies continue to be questioned by scholars.

By imperial command: Carl Czerny (top), who gave the premiere of the Fifth Piano Concerto, and JB Cramer, who first published it with the 'Emperor' nickname

Lasting impact

There is no doubt that piano lessons with Beethoven entailed working with a full-blooded creative being. Beethoven viewed the practice of playing through the eyes of a pianist-composer, someone who knew how to make the instrument respond to his constant desire for on-the-spot creation and improvisation. It is unsurprising that such urges should come to the forefront of his teaching. Ries recalls how Beethoven 'after a lesson had finished, spoke about the subject of fugues. I sat at the piano and he was next to me. I played the opening fugal theme from Graun's *The Death of Jesus*. He then copied it in his left hand, then added his right, and without any hesitation, worked [the material] through for about half an hour.'

Teacher demonstration, as we call it today, was a vital teaching tool for Beethoven. As Czerny observed, Beethoven's own use of legato was as important to his playing as it was prominent in his teaching. However, Beethoven's use of timing and of balance between the hands was equally distinctive. Ries recalled:

'Usually [Beethoven] played his compositions rather casually, remained mostly in strict time and only occasionally rushed the tempo. Occasionally he held back the tempo by using a ritardando when playing crescendo, which created attractive and highly noticeable effects. When playing he would emphasise sometimes the right and sometimes the left hand, creating an inimitable effect; however, he rarely played additional notes or ornamentation.'

Making music spontaneously seemed to have stayed with Beethoven even after his dramatic hearing loss. Czerny documents that around 1816 he (Czerny) started to organise musical get-togethers for his circle of students and selected guests. 'Beethoven was almost always present,' he remarks, 'and kindly obliged by improvising at the piano with the richness of ideas which characterised his improvisations, possibly even more so than his written-down music.'

What does all this tell us about Beethoven as a teacher, and how can we put this information to good use? Beethoven was most particular about the expressive element of music. If that meant laborious and detailed work to achieve the right effect, so be it. The accounts from his lessons underline that the details of his scores – dynamic markings, articulation, phrasing and so on – are extremely important and demand close attention.

There is a rich irony to this, coming from a composer whose musical manuscripts were more often than not a terrible mess. Notes, bars, sections, even entire movements were sometimes subject to drastic revisions, but not expression marks. From the information passed on by his pupils, it seems that for Beethoven as a piano teacher, working on expressivity was the most important component in his lessons. ■

Sources Czerny: *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben* (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1968)
Wegeler & Ries: *Biographische Notizen ueber Ludwig van Beethoven* (Berlin: Ries & Erler)
All translations by Nils Franke

Nils Franke is a German-born pianist, based in Berkshire, UK. His recordings have been released by Warner Classics and Brilliant Classics. Among his editions are anthologies published by Schott and an Urtext Primo series (Wiener Urtext) of Classical and Romantic easy pieces for the piano (including Beethoven) with teaching tips. nils-franke.com

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TRAVEL BACK IN TIME

Piano making is rooted in the history of Saxony, and nowhere more so than the factory of August Förster, where they still do things the old-fashioned way. **Gez Kahan** reports back

Don't mention the war, they say, but it's hard to walk around Dresden's old town without war intruding on one's thoughts. It's hard even to travel there without being reminded of the aftermath, flying into what used to be called West Berlin, on an overcast October morning that could have come straight out of a John Le Carré novel. But the Cold War is over for now, the coach encountered no checkpoints as it crossed to the east and, as the mist cleared, it became obvious that the sun now shines in the former GDR just as it always has in the Bundesrepublik. The allotments and pine forests are the same as in the rest of Germany, the factories and houses the same as across northern Europe, the skyscrapers and motorways and trucks the same as throughout the world. But for all the familiarity of the surroundings, at passport control, on the autobahn, in the *Reisebus*, this was a journey back in time, away from global homogeneity to an era of individuality and craftsmanship.

The main event for our party – 20 piano enthusiasts plus the hosts, Peregrine's Pianos – was a tour of what is possibly the most traditional piano factory still standing. The prime destination was Löbau, 60-odd miles east of Dresden, the capital of Germany's federal state of Saxony. It's a sleepy town about half an hour's drive from the borders of modern day Poland and the Czech Republic, with one notorious son (the *Hitler Diaries* forger, Konrad Kujau, was born there), a few notable buildings (including Europe's tallest cast-iron tower), and one important industry – the piano manufacturer August Förster.

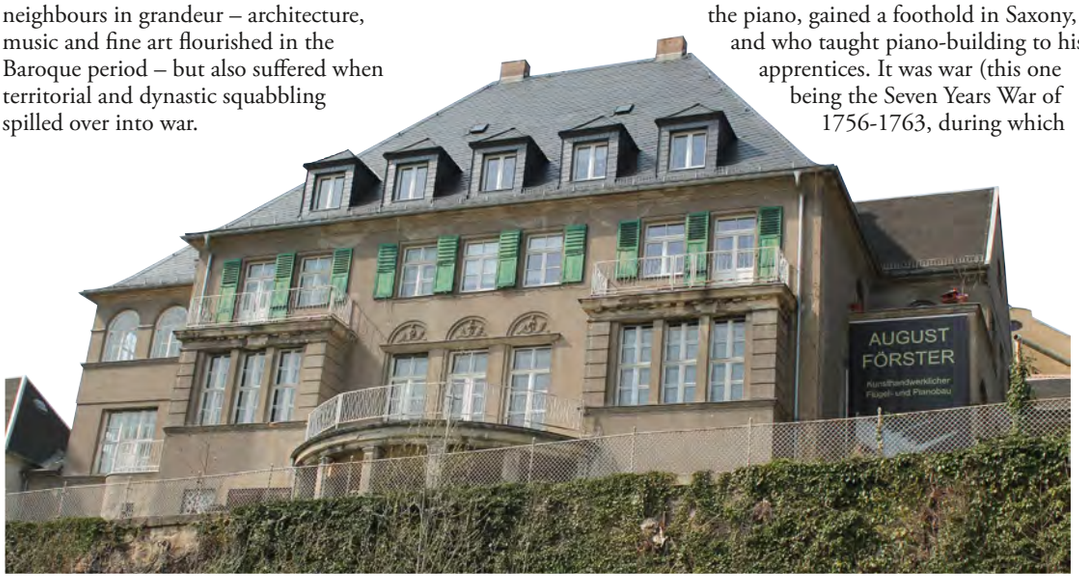
Time for some history

On the way from Berlin, a stop-off in Dresden helped to set Saxon piano manufacture in a valuable context. It's easy to forget that Germany, as a political entity, is a relatively modern concept. For over a thousand years, until formal unification in 1871, it was a collection of independent states and city states, united to some degree by a common language and disunited to a large extent by the ambitions of their princes. The arts benefitted from their determination to outdo their neighbours in grandeur – architecture, music and fine art flourished in the Baroque period – but also suffered when territorial and dynastic squabbling spilled over into war.

Above: The staff of August Förster, with the head of the family-run company, Annekatrin Förster, centre; below: the Förster Villa

The finest buildings in Dresden – the Zwinger Palace, the Castle, Protestant Frauenkirche and Cathedral (Katholische Hofkirche) – were commissioned or expanded under the rule of Augustus the Strong (Elector of Saxony, 1694-1733) and his son, also Augustus (Elector, 1734-1763). Organs for both churches were built by Gottfried Silbermann (Bach's favoured instrument-maker), though only the Hofkirche's instrument survived the bombing of Dresden in 1945. The Frauenkirche, left in ruins for nearly half a century as a witness to the terrible consequences of war, has now been restored as a symbol of reconciliation, though the organ was beyond repair.

It was Silbermann more than any other who ensured that Cristofori's invention, the piano, gained a foothold in Saxony, and who taught piano-building to his apprentices. It was war (this one being the Seven Years War of 1756-1763, during which



All images © August Förster

Saxony was overrun by Prussia) that caused those apprentices to scatter, taking their knowledge to London, Vienna and elsewhere – though Saxony remained (and remains) an important piano manufacturing region. Almost a century later, in 1859, August Förster opened his piano workshop.

The factory could wait for the following day: a reception and concert at the Förster Villa awaited our group when the coach pulled into Löbau. Part family home, sometime arts centre, this 1920s villa is situated at the bottom of the same street as the factory. A warm welcome from Annekatrin Förster, the fifth-generation head of the company, was the prelude to a fine chamber concert. This featured works from Bach to Frank Bridge, taking in Prince Orlofsky's aria from *Die Fledermaus*, wittily done by the mezzo-soprano Sophie Kent, and a moving performance of Bridge's *Oh That It Were So* by soprano Anna Lawrence; both singers are also staff members of Peregrine's Pianos, and were accompanied by Dawn Elizabeth Howells, the firm's proprietor.

Craftsmen at work: Preparing the frame on an upright (left); traditional techniques for carpentry joints (right); preparing the ribs on the soundboard (overleaf)

On the factory floor

If you've never visited a piano factory, do so. It's an education. The August Förster factory is a good one to start with, because it opens a window in time onto a much older world of instrument-making. From the outside it's just another anonymous building in a side street. What's inside is what counts, and much of that (as in any piano factory) is wood.

There are over 20 types of wood used in August Förster pianos. Spruce for the soundboards is sourced from Italian forests at a height of at least 1,000 metres (over 3,000 feet) in order to reduce the uneven ring-spacing that comes with variable climatic conditions. The spruce is felled in winter when the sap is at its lowest. There's red beech and white beech, maple (especially for rims), there are African hardwoods such as teak and mahogany, and there are exotic woods for the veneers.

Each consignment of wood is tracked in a hand-written logbook (log as in record, not timber) itemising type and delivery date, and the dates are marked on the sawn ends. The woods are aged for at least one year, sometimes as much as five, according to our guide, the Senior Intonation Director Frank Israel. He was erring on the conservative side; we saw timbers marked 2010 still in the acclimatisation room.

It's when you start walking through the workshops that a sense of heritage hits you fair and square. There are no robots, no computers (save in the administration department) and no production lines. Just a few machines in old-fashioned

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green and cream, and masses of clamps and hand tools. The newest device was a five-year-old wood-planing machine. Next to it stood a 100-year-old, electrically driven industrial saw.

You can't cut many piano-shaped components out of trees, so smaller pieces of wood are glued, clamped and bent. A 'star machine', dating from the 1920s, clamps together smaller pieces of wood that have been glued in order to make various components. Processed wood is then sent to a *Schlafraum* ('sleep room') for further acclimatisation before it can be used in the manufacturing process. There's more resting (for the wood) at every stage of the manufacturing process, which itself takes about a year from starting on the casework to the final tuning and voicing of the instrument.

The rim of an August Förster grand piano begins life as a 20-ply sheet of glued maple. A hand-adjusted press bends the sheet into shape with a multitude of clamps, held in position for several days before release. The curvature of the soundboard – crucial for the instrument's resonance – is likewise set up by hand. And August Förster is practically the only manufacturer still shaping the cheeks of a grand piano in the traditional way, by hand, using a two-person saw.

Throughout the factory, we saw the same kinds of manual manufacture, from the multiple sandings, fillings, smoothing and resandings of the frame and casework, and the careful laying up of matching veneers for non-black instruments (bird's eye maple and other exotic grained woods being too precious to use in slabs), to the insertion of tuning pins and bridges. Even the brass lettering (August Förster, Made in Germany) is done in the old way, by applying it to the wood before adding and then hand-sanding a polyester finish.

There is inevitable modernisation and replacement of aged machinery in the factory, Annekatrin Förster said, but that doesn't mean a move to the kind of Computer Numerical Control machines which can be programmed to produce multiple parts exactly the same. 'We're proud of our skills,' she remarked, 'and our future lies in tradition. August Förster will remain solely German-made, and we have *Bundesverband Klavier* (BVK) certification – a rigorous and expensive process – to prove it. We're solely hand-made and we won't be going into partnership with anyone. That defines our image, our concept and our destiny.'

European Union directives are a different matter. Work is underway to bring the factory building up to modern standards for emissions, waste and safety, but not all of this improvement is down to regulation: Annekatrin Förster is planning for 'steady growth, but not at the expense of quality'.

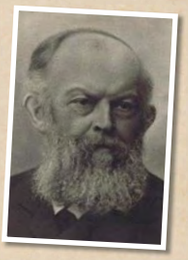
Growth, though, requires additions to the workforce, and she admits that training and recruitment can be difficult because so many young people want to use machines instead of learning a craft. She concentrates on local recruitment, 'because those who've grown up used to the slow pace of life in Saxony are less likely to get itchy feet for the bright lights.' There was one sign of modernity on the factory floor, in what had seemed to be an unreconstructed, masculine environment, with the appearance of a young woman in overalls. An apprentice, Frank Israel explained, just as he himself had been 43 years ago, and evidently undeterred by the heavy nature of some of the work.

The final stage of the factory tour afforded an opportunity to try out the company's pianos, in a collection of rooms offering privacy to those less confident about playing in front of others. With the tour over, our party took a wander around the main square of sleepy Löbau before getting on the coach. The impression left by the factory – the painstaking detail, the embodied craftsmanship on show, the sense of a heritage stretching far beyond the here and now of piano manufacture – was sufficiently strong that no one wanted to head for a *Schlafraum* of their own, despite a busy two days. Pianos, pianists, making and playing were the conversation topics of the day, and almost before we knew it, the coach was back in Berlin. ■

Tours of the August Förster factory can be arranged through www.peregrines-pianos.com. www.august-foerster.de

SAXON STORY

The history of August Förster



1829 August Förster born

1859 Having trained as a cabinet maker and studied piano-making, August Förster opens a piano workshop in Löbau

1862 The business expands to a factory which is the company's home to this day

1897 August's son, Cäsar, succeeds him as manager, opening a second factory in Georgswalde (now Jiříkov, in the Czech Republic – pictured below) and winning a warrant from the royal court of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

1915 Cäsar's sons Gerhard and Manfred succeed their father, continuing ownership of the business even after the post-war establishment of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany)

1945 Löbau reverts to being the sole authentic manufacturer of August Förster instruments following nationalisation of the Georgswalde factory by the Czechoslovakian government. Although pianos branded with the 'August Förster' label were still produced in Czechoslovakia/ Czech Republic until the turn of the century, these bear little relation to the output of the Löbau operation

1952 Manfred Förster dies

1966 Gerhard Förster dies and Manfred's son, Wolfgang Förster, takes over but can only settle the inheritance taxes by selling company shares to the government

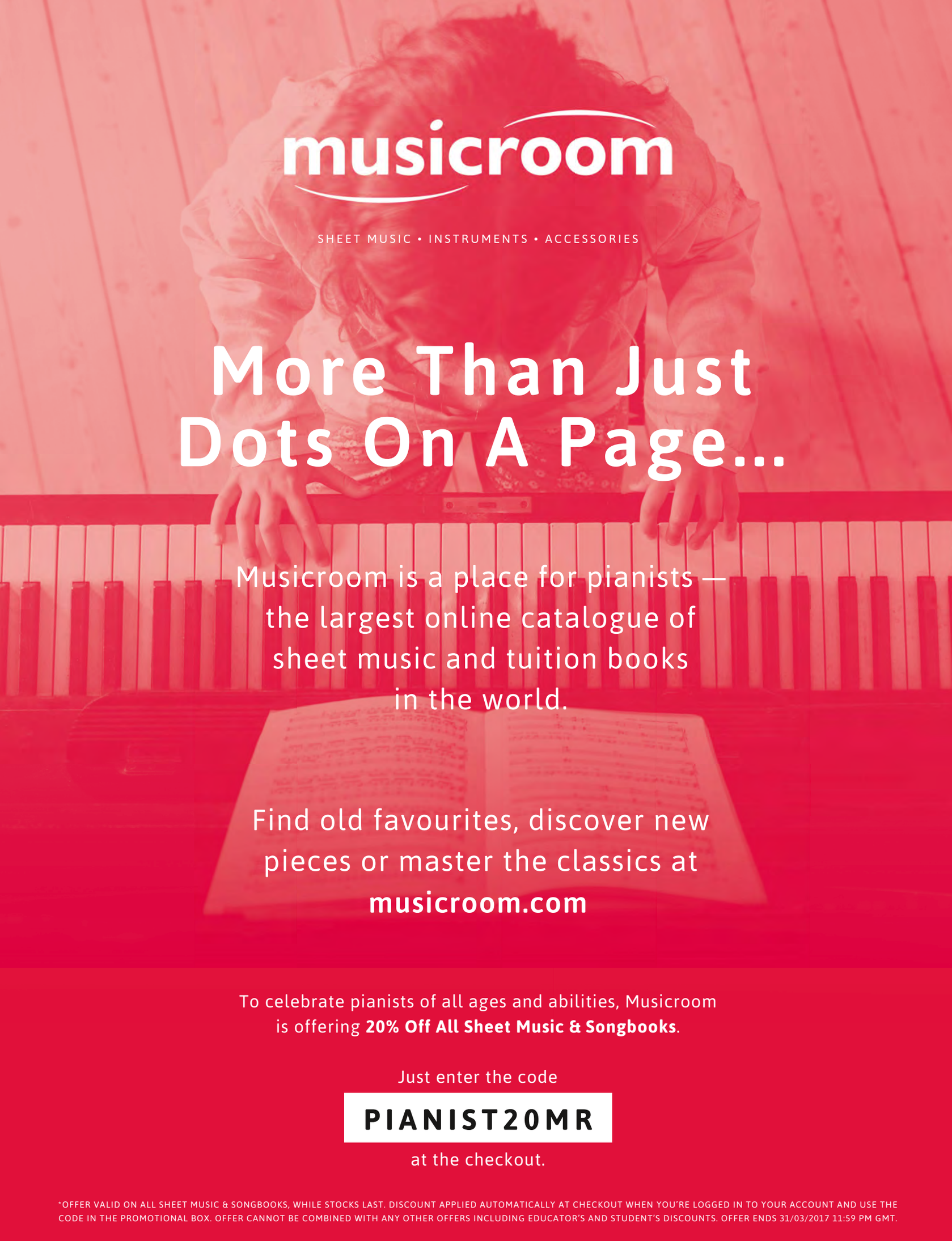
1972 Full nationalisation as VEB Flügel-und Pianobau Löbau, though still managed by Wolfgang Förster

1976 Restoration of the family name to the business as VEB Förster Pianos Löbau

1990 Reunification of Germany. Wolfgang Förster reprivatises the business

2008 Wolfgang Förster dies. Annekatrin Förster, after 15 years in August Förster's sales department, takes over as director, becoming the fifth-generation family head of the business

2016 August Förster currently employs about 40 staff producing 80 grands and 120 uprights per year



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CD reviews

Marius Dawn is excited by superlative recordings of Haydn, Mozart and Chopin, and intrigued by the latest offerings from two modern giants of the piano

Pianist star ratings: ★★★★★ Essential – go get it! ★★★★ Really great ★★★ A fine release ★★ Average ★ Fair

DANIEL BARENBOIM

On my new piano: Solo works by Scarlatti, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Wagner arr. Liszt
Deutsche Grammophon 479 6724
★★

In the spring of 2015 the Belgian maker Chris Maene produced a piano especially for Daniel Barenboim, based on a Steinway & Sons model D. The 'Barenboim' piano has straight parallel strings instead of the usual diagonal-crossing strings on today's grand. This change in design is meant to give the instrument a clearer and more transparent sound. In Liszt's *Funérailles* the stormy left-hand octaves are present and clear, and in the arrangement of the Solemn March from Wagner's *Parsifal* there is a lot of thundering, in the best sense of the word. It's hard to hear any special qualities from the piano when listening to rather lethargic accounts of three Scarlatti sonatas. Beethoven's 32 Variations again don't show Barenboim to advantage, but Chopin's First Ballade has a nice singing tone. Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* should really be left to those with the fingers for it, but at least the piano copes well with the repeated notes. A disappointing release.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET

Mozart: Piano Concertos in G K453 and B flat K456; Divertimento in B flat K137
Manchester Camerata/Gábor Takács-Nagy
Chandos CHAN 10929
★★★★★

One might be tempted to say that Jean-Efflam Bavouzet is Chandos Records' 'house pianist'. He has a long discography to his credit, and the record company has used him for repertoire spanning Beethoven sonatas to Prokofiev concertos. In fact, Bavouzet has even delved into lesser-known late-Romantic works for piano and orchestra by Pierné, and with some style. Here, then, is a gifted artist with secure technique and sound musicality ready for any challenge that comes his way.

Bazouzet's sensitivity conveys an understanding that it can be a tougher musical challenge to pull off one movement of a Mozart piano concerto than performing all five Prokofievs. With Mozart, there's nowhere to hide: every note is out in the open. Bavouzet casts magic over the orchestra's background accompaniment with his faultless, seamless execution of passagework and his exquisite phrasing of melodies.

The soloist blends harmoniously with the Manchester Camerata, and conductor Gábor Takács-Nagy clearly breathes the same musical lines as the pianist. At no point, though, does Bavouzet try to steal the limelight or play 'against' the orchestra. A good example is the fine first movement of the B flat Concerto K456 where the string section particularly phrases with such naturalness that you would think they have all performed this concerto their whole life. Tempi are perfect in the slow movement of K453 and the recorded sound throughout is natural and open. Bavouzet has composed his own cadenzas and written the informative booklet notes; there's little doubt he has put his heart and soul into this project.

YEFIM BRONFMAN

Bartók: Piano Concerto No 3; orchestral works by Bartók, Stravinsky and Prokofiev
London Symphony Orchestra/Valery Gergiev
LSO Live LSO5078 (2CD)
★★★★

With an intimate and restrained interpretation, Yefim Bronfman gives us one of the most moving accounts yet committed to disc of Bartók's final piano concerto. The orchestra's sound blends perfectly with the piano, like a glove fitting tightly around the hand, and the soloist shows no signs of stress in this charismatic live performance.

The concerto was performed within one of Valery Gergiev's final concerts as the Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra during a tour of the US. As well as Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin* Suite, Stravinsky's *Firebird* is executed with Gergiev's usual intensity and a Prokofiev encore is done with firm grandeur. However, nothing beats Bronfman's miraculous Bartók playing. The concerto alone makes this set essential listening. Good-quality recorded sound, and minimal audience noise.

ALEXANDRA DARIESCU

Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No 1; *The Nutcracker* Suite Op 71a (arr. Pletnev)
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Darrell Ang
Signum Classics SIGCD441
★★★★

Anyone recording Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto must have something special to say when practically all the great pianists in history have placed their stamp on this virtuoso warhorse. Alexandra Dariescu plays it safe in an interpretation where all the notes are played well and there are no sudden surprises. Pletnev's arrangement of *The Nutcracker* Suite, however, shows that here is a pianist with something special to say. The celesta part of 'The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy' rings out with bell-like clarity and the 'Trepak' is piano-playing at the highest virtuoso level. That she also makes the piano sing in the concluding Apotheosis is another example of her strong musicianship. The recording places the piano clearly in the centre of the sound picture, which complements Dariescu's rhythmic clarity, not least in her whimsical account of the 'Tarantella'.

LUCAS DEBARGUE

Bach: Toccata in C minor BWV911; Beethoven: Sonata in D Op 10 No 3; Medtner Sonata in F minor Op 5
Sony Classical 88985341762
★★★★

No great surprises are sprung by Bach's C minor Toccata, and an early Beethoven Sonata is straightforwardly done by the French pianist Lucas Debargue. What follows, however, is a five-star performance of Medtner's F minor Sonata, in which he competes with the best players of this neglected Russian titan of a composer. The bombastic first movement and motoric Allegro risoluto finale present monumentally styled playing, and the brief Intermezzo is as fine an account as those of Hamelin and Milne. Debargue projects that peculiar, chiaroscuro world of Russian sadness to perfection in the Largo. Medtner may be challenging both to play and to listen to, but with Debargue as your guide, you are in the best possible hands. In *Pianist* 91 I gave this pianist a lukewarm review for his debut recital disc. He has come a long way.

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DANNY DRIVER

The Romantic Piano Concerto 70: Piano concertos by Beach, Chaminade & Howell
BBC Scottish SO/Rebecca Miller
Hyperion CDA68130
★★★

Like it or not, the world of composers is dominated by men. So it's refreshing to see that the seventieth in Hyperion's long-running series presents a trio of female composers. Their previous neglect, however, proves understandable in this case. Dorothy Howell's Concerto has a certain post-Straussian vigour, but otherwise contains little to hold the attention. The *Concertstück* of Cécile Chaminade amounts to 15 minutes of cat-and-mouse chasing. Amy Beach wrote a large-scale, 35-minute concerto with some substance and a few original ideas, not least in a weighty first movement. Those keen listeners who have collected the previous 69 volumes will not hesitate to acquire the latest one, but its high points centre on Danny Driver and the BBC Scottish SO, who give scintillating performances, perhaps better than the music deserves.

NELSON GOERNER

Chopin: Polonaise Op 44, *Berceuse* Op 57, *Barcarolle* Op 60, 24 Préludes Op 28
Alpha Classics ALPHA 224
★★★★★

It may be tempting to label pianists as Bach players (Gould), Chopin specialists (Rubinstein) or simply keyboard wizards (Horowitz). To push the analogy further, it is no less tempting to declare that Nelson Goerner never makes a bad recording! Every one of his releases has been a revelation on its own terms, and his rock-solid musicianship never fails to impress. The mazurka-like middle part of the mighty Polonaise Op 44 is played with overwhelming determination. He rocks the *Berceuse* like a boat in the moonlight and sails through the Venetian *Barcarolle* before giving a uniquely polished and elegant account of the Préludes Op 28. There is no Argerich-style wildness to be savoured here, but rather a controlled forward drive. No Pollini-like intellectualism, but a logical approach, especially to the slower préludes. All of them are sustained and held together by Goerner's trademark singing piano tone, free of harshness.

LEON MCCAWLEY

Haydn: Sonatas and Variations
Somm SOMMCD 0162
★★★★★

Here is a Haydn CD to cherish. Four of his finest piano sonatas (No 53 in E minor, No 60 in C, No 33 in C minor and No 62 in E flat) are brought together with the sparkling F minor Variations for nearly 80 minutes of music. Still in the catalogue is Leon McCawley's benchmark recording on Avie of Mozart sonatas, which outclasses many prestigious names. Not that McCawley is restricted to Viennese classics: his Rachmaninov Preludes (also on Somm) compete with the Russian heavyweights.

Here McCawley relishes the playful and humorous sides to Haydn, not least in the finales of the two minor-key sonatas, and teases out harmonic surprises by broadening the slow movements of the C major and the late E flat major sonatas. A magisterial account of the F minor Variations makes a splendid close to this recital. Well-recorded piano sound shows up a poorly tuned instrument, but this should not hinder full enjoyment.

SOPHIE PACINI

Beethoven: Sonata in C Op 53 'Waldstein'; Liszt: Hungarian Rhapsody No 6, *Réminiscences de Don Juan* S418, *Consolations* etc.
Warner Classics 0190295977023
★★★★

When you've got it, flaunt it. Sophie Pacini possesses a dazzling technique which is more than a match for the challenges of Liszt's *Tannhäuser* transcription and *Réminiscences de Don Juan*, and she wipes the floor with his Sixth Hungarian Rhapsody. After a well-received album on Onyx of Schumann and Mozart concertos, her debut recital for Warner Classics opens with the finger-tricky 'Waldstein' Sonata. The only reflective moments come with Liszt's *Consolations* and the dreamy *Liebestraum* No 3, as if to prove she is human after all.

Pacini is a notable example of a young generation of pianists for whom the word 'fear' is not in their vocabulary. But forget about the stunning fingers for a moment, and listen to an original, musical approach to the works at hand, a good sense of voicing and no crazy idiosyncrasies. Warner Classics have made a real find in Sophie Pacini.

ANDRÁS SCHIFF

Live from the V International Tchaikovsky Competition: Solo works plus Tchaikovsky and Brahms First Piano Concertos
Moscow Radio SO/Dmitri Kitaenko
Melodiya MEL CD 10 02386 (2CD)
★★★

Like a politician who would prefer to erase the mistakes of a misspent youth, Schiff may wish that his performances at the 1974 Tchaikovsky Competition had been lost for good. Here is a 21-year-old firebrand showing little intellectual depth and hammering his way through a Rachmaninov *Etude-tableau* and a Liszt *Etude de concert* without any of the soft, light-touch trademarks of the mature Schiff. There's an attempt at flashiness in Tchaikovsky's First Concerto, and some uncharacteristic banging in the Shostakovich and Prokofiev works which in part is due to harsh recording quality. The poor sound, though, does not detract from a fine account of the Brahms Concerto, where a rounded singing tone – most apparent in the slow movement – offers a glimpse of things to come.

MITSUKO UCHIDA

Mozart: Piano Concertos No 17 in G K453 & No 25 in C K503
The Cleveland Orchestra
Decca 483 0716
★★★★★

It's tempting to compare Mitsuko Uchida's account of K453 with Bavouzet's opposite [Editor's Choice]. But they are worlds apart. Where Uchida directs the Cleveland Orchestra from the piano, Bavouzet has an eminent conductor to partner him. Uchida may bring a more varied palette of colours and a more careful and fragile approach to Mozart compared to the forthright energy of Bavouzet, but each has their own, distinctive qualities.

It's in the majestic C major Concerto K503 where Uchida's sovereign pianism is most evident. The orchestra accompanies her like a shadow, with exquisite phrasing from the strings. Some may contend that this is Mozart playing in the Romantic tradition of early Barenboim and even Edwin Fischer, who also conducted from the piano. Uchida, however, has enough personality to make this Mozart her own.

Sheet music

New scores of Russian classics, a Liszt masterpiece, Bartók dances and contemporary music for student pianists are surveyed by **Michael McMillan**

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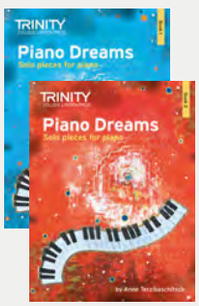

PIANO DREAMS

Anne Terzibaschitsch
Trinity College London Press
ISBN: 978-0-85736-488-3 (Book 1); -489-0 (Book 2)

Playing through these pieces, it quickly becomes apparent that the composer is an experienced piano teacher. Not only does all the music lie well under the hand, but the textures, chordal patterns, hand movements, and rhythmic coordination reveal an insider's understanding of how a student at this level operates. The 39 pieces in Book 1 are suitable for beginners (Grades 0-1), and the second contains 27 pieces at Grade 1-2. In places the music can be rather bland, but there are pieces with original effects, such as *The Old Gramophone* (Book 2) in which the performer is invited at three points in the music to repeat *ad lib* for a bar in order to imitate the needle of the gramophone player getting stuck. Such details make these books well worth investigating.

There are also two duet books (ISBNs: 978-0-85736-490-6 [Book 1]; 491-3 [Book 2]) which provide complementary material to help develop a student's sight-reading skills and their awareness of ensemble.

CLASSICAL FAVOURITES FROM RUSSIA

Universal Edition
ISBN: 978-3-7024-7331-0

This book contains seven pieces by Russian composers, arranged for piano duet by Nicolai Podgornov. The primo part (and occasionally the secondo) is often written on a single stave and the music is sympathetically arranged for students around Grade 3-6. The parts are printed above each other, making it easier to comprehend and establish ensemble. The repertoire is a well-chosen mix of popular Russian classics from the 19th and 20th centuries. Prokofiev's *Montagues and Capulets*, Khachaturian's *Sabre Dance* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* will attract students drawn to energetic music. Those who prefer mellower tunes will appreciate Tchaikovsky's *Dance of the Little Swans*, and Shostakovich's Waltz from his Second Jazz Suite. Pianists without an octave stretch will struggle to play most of the bottom parts as written.

PIANO SKETCHES

Vitalij Neugasimov
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 978-0-19-341327-6 (Book 1); -341328-3 (Book 2)

Vitalij Neugasimov (b.1978) is a Lithuanian composer, arranger and piano teacher. His music in these two volumes exhibits a wide range of moods and styles, and features catchy melodies, rhythmic interest and attractive harmonies that are sure to motivate practice. Book 1 (suitable for pianists around Grades 2-3) contains 18 pieces, one of which is on the ABRSM's 2015-16 Grade 2 syllabus. Book 2 (for Grades 4-5) contains 14 pieces. All 32 pieces are just one or two pages long, but they are in a different league to the humdrum fare often written at this level. Highly recommended!

BARTÓK

Romanian Folk Dances
Chester Music
ISBN: 978-1-78558-271-4

Bartók's seven volumes of Romanian Folk Dances range in difficulty from Grade 2-6 and are among his most popular and approachable works. They were originally published in 1918 by Universal Edition, and first appeared in a revised edition made by his son, Peter Bartók, in 1993. The Chester Music edition is laid out clearly in quirky, angular fonts, with a useful two-page introduction. The score layout is identical to the Universal Edition, with the same number of bars per line and lines per page. The fingering, too, is almost exactly the same. Chester's cheaper price and editorial commentary may sway your decision.

LISZT

Sonata in B minor
Henle
ISMN: 979-0-2018-0559-7 (HN 559)

Dismissed by Clara Schumann as 'nothing but a sheer racket' yet lauded by Wagner as 'beautiful beyond compare', Liszt's Sonata in B minor is now a rite of passage for keyboard lions. Henle's first edition of the work appeared in 1973 and was prepared by Ernst Herttrich, with fingering by Hans-Martin Theopold. This new edition is also edited by Herrtrich, and Liszt's original fingering is now supplemented by Marc-André Hamelin. There are many editorial emendations to the staccato markings, distinguishing between Liszt's careful use of dots and dashes, and the Sonata's low final B is now presented as an octave. A full editorial commentary is printed after the score, and Henle has made a few cosmetic enhancements: the previous edition was saddle-stitched, but this one is smyth-sewn, and the staves are now slightly wider and taller, which makes the music marginally easier for the eyes to digest.

SPECTRUM 5

ABRSM
ISBN: 978-1-84849-683-5

The Spectrum series was devised by Thalia Myers in collaboration with the ABRSM in order to bring serious new music to students, amateurs and professional pianists. The fifth volume includes 15 pieces between Grade 6 to diploma level by 15 contemporary composers. With the exception of Karen Tanaka's wonderfully written *Masquerade* (which is on the ABRSM's new Grade 6 syllabus), these are all pieces that require work from both listener and student to appreciate their qualities. The project is nevertheless an admirable one, and those curious to know more can listen to samples at https://www.abrsmdownloads.org/piano/spectrum_5. The entire collection is available for both digital download and streaming, recorded by Myers herself, on Usk Records.

THE PIANO PLAYLIST

Arranged by Barrie Carson Turner
Schott
ISBN: 978-1-84761-419-3

In this volume, Barrie Carson Turner has made pianistically conceived arrangements of 50 well-known classical themes, from symphonies, concertos and stage works to simplified versions of famous piano solos such as Debussy's *Clair de Lune* and Chopin's Nocturne Op 9 No 2. The book is advertised as suitable for Grades 1-4, but Grades 3-6 seems to be a more appropriate level. Students of all ages at this standard will appreciate the quantity, variety and selection of music presented. The book is also recommended as a useful sight-reading volume for students at higher grades.

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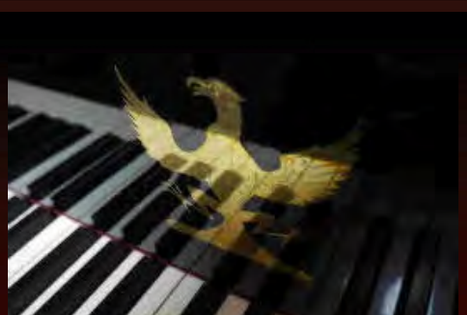

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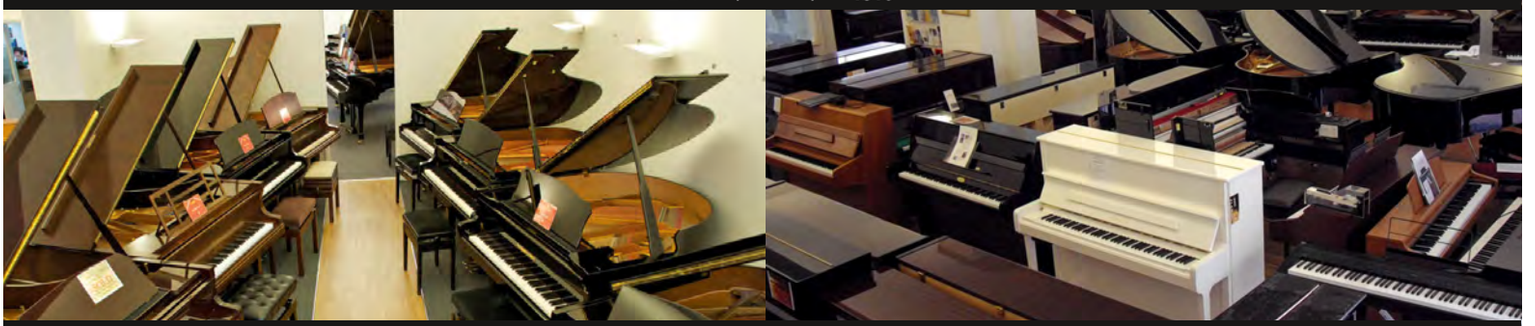

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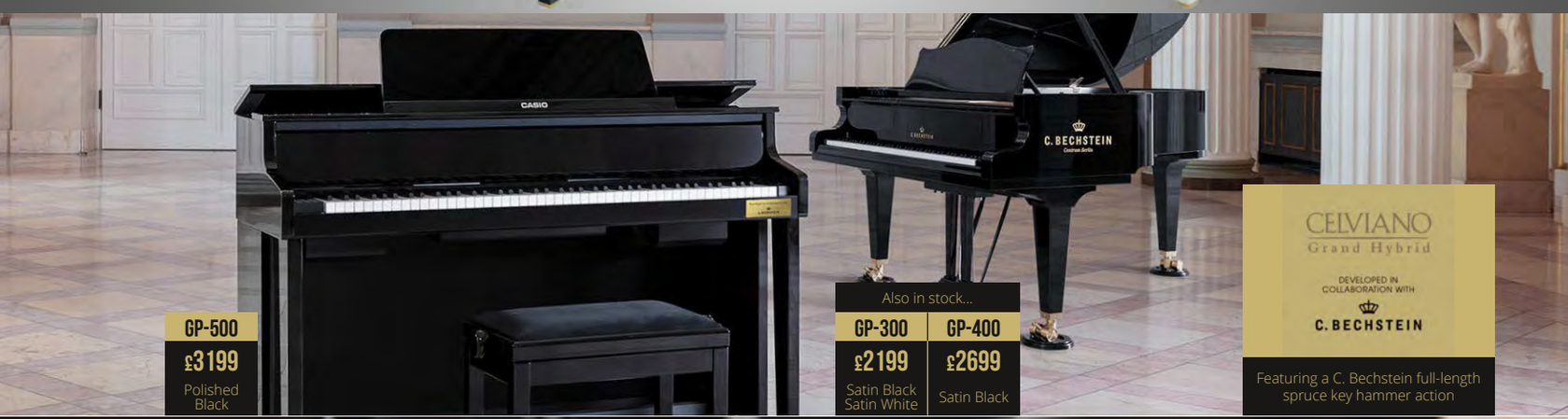

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